

No. 139



MERRY ENGLAND

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[ONE SHILLING.

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ARCUBISHOP LAUD.

MERRY ENGLAND.

FEBRUARY, 1895.

A Shepherd of His Flock.

WE wore a speckled frock, a wide-brimmed straw hat, with a faded pink ribbon round it, worsted socks, and a pair of small ploughman's boots. On Sundays he used to come out, gorgeously, in white socks edged with lace. Also, on that day, a frill of lace showed out from under the hem of his Sunday frock (it was of a finer texture and brighter colouring than his week-a-day one) and bore discreet but convincing testimony to the superior elegance of his Sunday drawers. I am speaking now of his very young childhood; for this special and sabbatical gorgeousness was a thing of the past after the coming of "Peter" and increasing family cares.

His name was Willie Steele, and for three long years—the wondering pucker between his eyebrows growing deeper every day—Willie puzzled over the reason of his existence. He worked out this problem, without any outside help, when he was about three years old; though the conclusion drawn from it was less the result of a careful deduction than the disclosure of inspired revelation.

The question was practically solved at that period of his life when his mother (who kept hens in order to supply the de-

ficiencies in a family income that depended on the precarious wage of her fisherman husband) installed him in the post of hen feeder and egg-collector in chief, and gave him charge of the unfledged chickens. Willie called them "shickens"; and it was a sight to make one rather weep than smile, to see him, in his speckled frock and hose, his fearless, brown eyes shining in the sunlight, his rosy lips parted, his yellow hair blowing in the strong sea breezes that used to shake his cliff-perched cottage home and the adjoining sheds as if they were things of cardboard—his tiny fingers scattering his seed far and wide, and on his forehead a care as great as that of Atlas, who, they tell us, bore the whole world on his single shoulders. The cockerels used to attack Willie by combined and individual premeditated design. It was a common sight to see him wrestling with a dozen of them at a time; but never was he known to be finally overcome of them, or his seed basket looted by their lawless beaks.

"Now, mind, Willie, you're to look after the 'ens feedin' and the eggs; and this 'ere little yard is your special charge."

That was how Willie's mother, a shiftless, tender-hearted, slack-willed soul, riveted the eternal chains on Willie's baby wrists. But they had been as inevitable as they were everlasting, because Willie's idea of duty was so terrible and supreme. The young cocks in "this 'ere little yard" crowed back shrill defiance from the other side of the wire netting.

"Yes, Muvver," said Willie.

The puzzle of life was over for him now. He realised, in taking over his charge, that he had been created to look after the "shickens." He modified his first solution of the great enigma when his baby brother was born, a few weeks later; but the modification increased his responsibility. As the delicate, white, silent baby lay on his mother's lap, he learnt, at that same mother's knee, that the ministry to which he had been called was capable of manifold variations; and became aware that he was

sent into the world, partly to look after the chickens, but just as equally to look after Baby Peter.

But when he said "Yes, Muvver," and the cockerels shrieked back unholy defiance at him, he had no thought beyond the feathered charge. It was a bright July morning, and the sunlight leapt in and out of the little beach waves that were wont to lash themselves into all manner of furious shapes, and, when the seasons shifted, to shake the cliffs that now they did not wash with the softest fringe of foam.

On the high brow of the cliff, half-a-mile distant along the coast, the coastguard's station showed a white dazzling face to the sea-front. The little fishing village on the left, as one faced the Channel, snuggled into the shadowed fork of the split cliff; and the white sails of the fishing boats, coming home with the morning light, shone out far at sea. Rather more than midway between the coastguard station and the village was visible the end of the great, black wall of the breakwater, that ran sheer into the sea at high tide. It was necessary to double the cliff if one would follow it up, in vision, to where it joined touch with the rock-hewn landing-place, which was reached from the beach by many laborious little steps, cut unevenly out of the cliff itself.

Very far away inland, the changing face of the illimitable Downs reflected the face of the deep blue sky, beneath which the shifting cloud-banks drifted into colossal snow-bound shapes. Their shadows played over the country, as the wind plays over a field of wheat; and not one shadow was alike, and all were continually altering. But in Mrs. Steele's chicken yard the sunlight and shadow alternated in almost regular, perfectly dependable streaks.

"See the young cock'rels is well watered, Willie. The 'eat this summer's enough to make their feathers drop out—let alone starvin' for want o' drink, pore things! Mind you see the trough's kept clean, Willie, and full!"

"Yes, Muvver," said Willie.

The crest of the largest cock in the hen-yard would have been on a level with Willie's shoulder should the bird have stood on tiptoe. But it was from the younger cocks—long-legged, scanty of plumage, ragged-combed through incessant civil warfare, hungry-eyed and despotic, thirsting for blood and their neighbour's share of food—it was from these lawless kinglets that the serious trouble of the charge might be expected.

Willie gazed at them through the round holes of the wire, and, baby as he was in years, sifted their evil hearts, as they clamoured, riotously, the other side of the enclosure, their eyes catching and holding the sunlight like living diamonds. Mrs. Steele opened an upper doorway let into the wire, and threw a handful of barley over their heads. Some very agitated tails were all that were seen the next few breathless, choking minutes.

Eventually, they fought over the last grain, three braves claiming it as their own by divine right. Blood flowed and feathers flew around. "Keep 'em well fed, Willie, on'y don't stuff 'em or let 'em mope. I'll get Dad to clean out their 'ouse till you gets bigger, and more used to it like while I'm laid up. They're your lot to keep 'em well and 'appy. Now you're to mind and see they thrive, Willie!"

"Yes, Muvver," said the keeper of the cockerels.

When a chicken died, as we all do sooner or later, the steadfast shadow of anxiety in Willie's eyes deepened to an absorbing anguish. Watchful care, such as we rarely expend on our supremest interest, brought Mrs. Steele's hen-yard, and above all the yearly broods, to be a byword of triumph and renown along the coast, wherever other hen-wives foregathered.

When any hen (of incalculable value in future broods) shuffled off life's halter, Willie buried it as we bury our dearest hopes and watered its grave with tears. If a hen tired of setting and basely forsook the nest, he scourged it back to its forsaken eggs

with the zeal of an apostle and the relentless vigour of a whole-hearted devotee. One would have thought his one absorbing charge was his mother's cocks and hens, so terribly in earnest was he in his fulfilment of the various duties pertaining thereto.

Yet a greater charge was Willie's, and ten thousand times more overwhelming were the responsibilities of the other, his real flock—responsibilities to which those engendered by the cocks and hens were as the shadow cast by a candle's rays compared with the light of the morning sun.

First, there was Peter. He came a few weeks after Little Steele took over the charge of the cockerels. They did not call him Little Steele in derision, because he was so small and his ideal so great, but rather to distinguish him from his father, Steele. From his birth Peter's mother, as I have said, gave him over into Little Steele's keeping. Peter did not find the use of his legs for fully a year after most young, two-legged things are seamed with scars, the trophies of a thousand valiant attempts to stand erect. He never learnt to talk, because he was born deaf. Little Steele expended on him a passion of tenderness and pity, because he was so white and tiny and fragile. Peter was the ewe lamb of his flock, and his pathetic eyes haunted Willie's dreams.

The rest of the flock included Sal and Sue, great, fat, rollicking four-year-olds when Little Steele's tragic story should properly begin, individually a handful-and-a-half, collectively rather less manageable than a homeward bound draft ; Joey, a model specimen of inherent juvenile virtue, but with a fatal and growing tendency to play "follower" to the twins' "leading" (which was, unfortunately, generally in a lawless direction) ; and a serene, large-headed baby, who smiled to the name of Migsey. Except Peter, Little Steele had advanced his babies in the art of walking at an early age. This was in order that he might be disengaged of the preceding infant in arms when the next should appear. Migsey's first birthday found her still unpro-

moted to first steps, and Willie her bearer. She was a stout and heavy child, and Little Steele dreaded bandiness in his unfeathered flock as he dreaded croup among the hen-coops.

There was another Steele on its way from the stars, but Willie could not help this. In justice to Mrs. Steele, it will be granted that her maternal duties did not allow her much leisure in which to act as nursemaid and instructor to her family.

Willie fulfilled both functions with his inimitable steadfastness of purpose, while the hen-yard throve apace. When he was seven, he still wore speckled frocks and short worsted hose, his promotion to jacket and trousers being periodically delayed owing to the continuously deficient condition of the Steele exchequer. It seemed likely that Willie would grow to old age in speckled frocks, because in proportion as the hen business "looked up," the fishing slackened; and there was always that very occupied cradle to further weigh down the balance against his chances of attaining the dignity of masculine garb. It was something of a real grief to Willie that his contemporaries should stumble around in knickerbockers, many before they could well run alone. But it was a sorrow that assailed him more rarely than might be imagined. He knew that he was short for his age, and that he was more often taken to be four years old than seven. Also, the opportunities for reflection on a state that might have been his, as opposed to that which was, were a little less common to him, in the midst of his many cares, than nightingales in December.

Though every day was a field day for Willie, there are one or two days in his life that stand out supreme against the changeless background of the dominant daily duty; and these rather through the absolute quality of their nature, than as affording any fresh revelation of his character. One of these days was the occasion of an infantile excursion for blackberries. God help him! One of Little Steele's arms acted as Joey's

crutch, stay, and promoter of steps ; on the other swung a five-quart pail that his mother had vaguely bidden him and his flock to "fill."

He drove his sheep before him with a hooked stick—and you will imagine Little Steele had a third hand to do this, if you have not conceived a faint idea of the manifold nature of his resource. Their way to the Lower Downs, where the best blackberries grew, began with the hen-yard (where the twins fell to throwing stones at the young cocks, and with difficulty were driven off the gratuitous attack, onwards) ; sloped up a long, high-banked lane (in which Joey fell down on his button of a nose no fewer than thirty-five times) ; dragged them still higher to the crest of the hill (at which point Peter began to evince symptoms of that disquieting restlessness that he always showed when brought face to face with boundless spaces—whether it were of sea, or sky, or open down country) ; and finally cast them ashore at the bottom of a little field, flanked by downs to the north and the east, and to the west by more fields and meadow land, as far as the eye could reach.

The richest, juiciest blackberries grew here. The little flock fell on the grass, in various attitudes of delight, weariness, and exhaustion. Willie measured the depth of his tin pail with his calculative eye, and grasped his crook firmly in his hand. It was then that an enormous sow emerged through a gap in the hedge and strode towards the group, like a plague and an invading host in one ; swift, terrible, and relentless ; a litter of young pigs following hard on her heels.

"It's to kill us and to give us to her childuns to eat," thought Little Steele, knowing the implacable nature of a sow with young. The colour slipped from his lips.

There is a game called "Fox and Goose," in which each "gosling" holds the tail of the one in front of him, the first holding the tail of the mother goose, whose duty and business it is to defend her long train with outspread hands, the fox en-

deavouring to catch the goslings and detach each one from the rest, as the long string sways to and fro. It is a lively game enough, and both fox and goose, and goslings on the string, are well exercised in their efforts to capture and evade capture. Moved less by the panic fear created by the situation than by the indescribable fire and command of Willie's eyes, the sheep were on their feet, behind their shepherd, in the twinkling of an eye, and Little Steele found himself the leader of a breathless, whispering tail. The crook was rigid in Willie's hand. Joey tugged hard at the skirts of his frock.

"Back!" said Little Steele, in an unrecognisable whisper.

Sue was the last of the string, and her intelligence was Titanic. Also her position was the safest, though only Little Steele knew that the sow would have to come on over his dead body to reach his flock.

The enemy halted, perhaps daunted at the strategy of the defence. "Back," said Little Steele again, in his deep, hoarse whisper.

Sue backed, Sal backed, Peter backed ; Joey was borne in the air between Peter's grip and Willie's skirts, but he backed ; Little Steele backed. The sow came on, one slow deliberate step, and Sue backed again.

Sue backed beautifully, and the string followed suit. Sue wound her way north-west by north, up the slope of the little field towards the larger gap in the opposite hedge on the brow of the hill. Little Steele fixed his eyes on the stupid, red-rimmed eyes in front of him. As they stopped the string went back ; as the string went back the sow followed.

Sue backed out through the gap. Her superb presence of mind was of the nature of genius. Joey fell back into his large sun bonnet ; but he was borne through, in a horizontal position, by the impetus of the train. Little Steele backed through the last ; he felt the hot breath of the sow on his cheeks, its filthy muzzle was exactly level with them.

"I've got to save vese childuns, somehow," thought Little Steele, with a dry sob of suspense.

"Take hands, childuns, and run down ve hill togever," gasped, Willie. Sue, a host in herself, and Sal, a worthy coadjutor, grabbed bits of Joey; Peter clawed hold of them all three. Four fat legs, two thin legs, and a round body with no legs at all worth mentioning, dwindled down the hill.

Little Steele stood in the gap and barred it with his body and his hooked stick. His adversary continued to keep a pair of extremely astonished eyes on the audacious, quivering figure in front of its nose.

Willie's heart stopped. The thought that raced wildly through his brain, awaiting the attack, was that if he were killed and eaten up there would be no one at all to drive Peter off the beach at high tides!

He expected a momentary and violent dissolution, and a pang of wonder struck him, for the briefest fraction of a second, as to whether "the childuns" would be safe in the valley by the time the last fragments of his body had disappeared down the throats of the sow and her young ones.

And the ending is tame enough, after all! For the brute, instead of requiring Little Steele's body, was content with dispersing his company. In fact, it turned a rather contemptuous tail upon the hero in the hedge, and, instead of leading on him a porcine assault, charged its own flock, and this with something of the precipitancy of pique.

Willie's heart raced round again, and his diminutive legs into the valley. He found his flock in a ditch, and tears, at the bottom of the hill. But it was as a conqueror, urging on victorious troops, that he drove them home that day.

"'Twas a miracle of an escape, that! If any finged happened to me, Peter'd get drownded, sure's eggs is eggs," thought Willie, in the lonely watches of the night. To keep an eye on Peter, so that the alluring waves beating on the shore beneath, and, in

time of storms, against the wall of the cliff itself—that these everlasting waves should not overwhelm Peter in their toils, was Willie's chiefest care.

"You can't speak, Peter, but your eyes mean mischief," thought Little Steele.

It was a grey, sullen-faced morning, after a night of raging wind and storm. The Spirit of the Storm was driving all his horses and chariots across the face of the resisting sky. Great guns blew from the south-west, and the belt of trees that stood between the upper and the lower Downs was bared of leaves in one wanton night. It was the fall of the year, when the first frosts lie heavy and long on the ground, and the fishing boats were pulled up high and dry.

"Last night ye breakwater was covered wif water from top to toe, Muvver," said Willie.

Though Migsey was a fat, fair two-year-old now, and another moon-faced baby beamed out of the old cradle, Little Steele could not pronounce his "ths" correctly; nor had he yet put away his childish clothes. "It can't be done this year, Willie boy," was what his mother used to say. "But Dad talks o' gettin' a new rig out if times is better next year—terrible expensive things is new clothes, Willie! Then I'll cut up Dad's old trousies and make a pair for ye."

The little house shook to its foundations, being caught in the teeth of the storm. The hen-yard was deserted, except for a few exhausted mops, who, having had the hardihood to venture out, could not now get back to the hen-house; and were tossed to and fro like shuttlecocks for the wind's sport. Willie went his rounds at noon, and was near overturned, himself, each time the wind let out its breath, and rescued those rash spirits from their perilous pastime, it being a sheer tug of war between himself and the wind for one or two inert, sopping masses of feathers.

Eventually, Willie saw his feathered flock safe from the storm

within the hen-house walls, and resuming care of the other flock, found Sal leading a general raid on Mrs. Steele's winter preserves, that gentle mother being occupied in suckling her babe above stairs. "Yey're good children on the whole," Little Steele would explain to one, "but yey'se a deal of mischief in ye best of yem. An' Peter's yat deep! I can't never get to ye bottom of *him*!"

Peter's desires were few, but they were deeper than the deepest sea and as steadfast as the light in Willie's eyes. He wanted to follow the white sails of the fishing boats, as they dipped down the other side of the world, where the sky hung low; or in the passage of the South wind over the Downs; or the wild wings of the sea-birds as they followed the fishermen out to sea.

Willie was aware of the direction of Peter's thoughts, but knew that the dreamer had no conceptions of the difficulties he would experience, were he once off on the wings of his desire. Many evenings of the last, long summer (in which Peter realised, for the first time, the possibilities of a longer flight than one authorised by Willie's omnipotent eye)—many a summer evening had Little Steele stolen out after this, the gentlest of his flock (yet the one who most persistently, because the most unconsciously, went astray), and brought him back to the fold, wistful-eyed since he could not speak his desire, even from the very feet of the long, low Downs.

When Peter learnt the way to the waves—and that was before the last leaves fell—another care was added to those the shepherd bore.

Yet late in the afternoon of a second tempestuous day, when the flock was summoned to tea and scones, and Peter was suddenly found to be missing, the blow fell as sharply as if previous apprehension had not foretold the possibility of that tragic flight.

Little Steele's hands went out, instinctively, in piteous, be

seeching prayer to the Gods of the storm ; but his mother, knowing Peter's vagrant passion, fell to shaking and crying, her infant pressed to her breast.

Willie's bloodless lips shot a fierce cross-examination into the rest of the flock. Sal said she had last seen Peter by the parlour window staring out seawards, and that he *would* not play "Cobbler, cobbler, mend my shoe!" with them ! And that it was only a little while before Willie called out to them from the back kitchen that tea was ready.

To this unshaken testimony, Sue added that she thought Peter was crying softly to himself, as he cried that morning, when Willie would not let him go out and watch the sea break over the breakwater.

Joey said *he* "fought Peter had got drownded dead in ye sea, 'cos he always wanted to run down to it, and yat *he* was very hungry."

Migsey smiled, and made grabs at the nearest piece of buttered scone. The infant slept placidly on its weeping mother's breast; but Little Steele was out in the storm after his lost sheep.

Part of the eastern breakwater beyond the village had been blown down in the storm of the preceding night. The elder Steele, in the enforced cessation of the fishing industry, was lending a hand to its restoration. They worked as long as the elements were moved to tolerate their futile labour, and were driven homeward, with the close of the short afternoon and the renewed rising of the wind. Little Steele turned his feet eastwards, himself being driven swiftly on under the brow of the cliff.

A black cloud hung over the western horizon ; grey mists rolled up from the sea, and the dull thunder of the white-lipped waves came steadily nearer shore. The desolation of that lonely beach was a desolation not to be described.

Yet Peter's feet had probably trodden it but a little while before ; and Willie hunted for the tiny footprints, and, hunting vainly, went steadily onwards.

He found the eastern breakwater deserted of the men, and the work of their past day already undone. The storm blasts hooted over his head, and night seemed to have fallen suddenly upon himself and the world. He felt sure, instantly, that the workmen had gone home by the upper road, seeking the shelter of the Downs. He wondered, brushing away a starting tear of weariness, and with a suspense that was less hope than pain, if, in missing thus the workmen, he had missed Peter in their merry midst.

Turning homewards, and following in their tracks, he met the force of the wind, yet not fully, for the road fell behind the cliff ; and its defenceless face the other side, and the Downs above, bore the chief brunt of its fury. Little Steele staggered homewards, and wherever the roads twisted seawards or sloped upwards, the wind tore afresh at his tiny skirts and whistled through his uncovered hair ; his hat was blown off long ago ; while the breath was nearly blown out of his body by the time he reached the one long, narrow village street. At the top of this street stands "The Merry Men," the little inn it is so difficult to pass after a long day's labour with the sweat of your brow and the price of a "moog" in your pocket.

The inn door showed a blank face towards the storm this night, and Willie went past with suspense uneased and quickened footsteps. Half-way down the street he spied, in a doorway, the only living face he had seen since he went out to find his lamb !

The face belonged to one Gregory, grocer and storesman. Little Steele hailed him with tiny voice, almost lost in the tempest, and being blown to his slippered feet, rooted as they were on his doormat, made shift to repeat his breathless question.

Gregory had seen the men pass with their tools over their shoulders ; they looked a battered lot !

"An' my farver!" gasped Little Steele.

Gregory shrugged shoulders, implying complete inability to answer the question.

"But Peter," insisted the shepherd ; "was he wif 'em—a little, ever so little boy ?"

Gregory shook his head. "Run 'ome to your mammy, sonny, and git dry clothes on," rang long and dully in Little Steele's ears, as he fought his way further down the street.

But if he had known it—ah ! if he had but known it, there was pictured a scene in the kitchen of "The Merry Men" that he had passed by a short while back, unwitting of what it held. A scene that would have brought his seeking to a close, and his feet to his shadowed home, with the news of the lost one found on his lips, and the shepherd's supreme joy in his heart.

And the scene was a cheerful fire and lamp-lit interior ; mine host of "The Merry Men" brewing a lordly cup ; mine hostess drying some tiny socks before a fire, and Peter in his father's arms—a sleepy truant, not wishful any more to explore the ways of the deep waters, but content, at last, to be found.

"The Merry Men," as usual, had been irresistible, and the elder Steele considered, not without some show of favourable argument, that Peter had been lost so many hours now, it could not much matter if his restoration to the flock were delayed by the few minutes necessary to the brewing and the disposal of the "cup."

But Little Steele had not known or seen anything of that comforting scene behind the blank face of "The Merry Men."

In a partial lull of the storm he gained his own cliff-perched home, flanked by many hen-sheds. He remembered, with another throb of anguish, that he had not attended to the hens since noon.

But to find Peter was the first and only care then, and he merely pressed his white, rain-washed face to the kitchen window one minute, to see if, by chance, Peter had found his way back of his own accord, before he went on towards the unexplored

west, where his little world ended with the great black wall of the breakwater, and beyond which, very far away, where he could not see but knew, the lights of the coastguard station would be twinkling out of the darkness.

By the cheerful firelight Little Steele saw his mother, seated at the hearth, rocking herself to and fro in her grief and her suspense, her unconscious baby in her arms. Sal and Sue, in zealous imitation of his own business-like methods, and with a manner of conscious glory at their dominant position, were washing and wiping up the tea things, miniature housewives, with the earnestness of novelty still supreme. Joey crooned, happily, over a tower of bricks, and Migsey nursed a headless doll, imitating the maternal scene the other side of the hearth with a gravity that could not extinguish her large, pervading smile. If the lost lamb had not strayed, Little Steele knew that Peter on his stool, staring into the wondrous lands that lie between the red hot coals, would have been added to the home-like and—save for that weeping mother—cheerful and pleasant scene.

The vision of his lost lamb, wandering where his childish, erratic fancy took him (and where that would be his shepherd knew not !) drove him on again, after that momentary assurance that Peter was not safe at home. With a heart aching as few hearts ever ache, Little Steele wondered how Peter could have made progress at all, any way—north, or east, or south, or west—in that cruel wind and rain and the black night ; but he did not dare pause to wonder if Peter were not even now overcome by the storm, and perhaps lying at the foot of the cliff, blown over the edge like a leaf in fall.

He took the road along the brow of the cliff, westwards, and knowing whereto Peter's instincts travelled, followed it where it shelled down upon a lower pathway, cut through the rocks at the base of the cliff side. The salt from the sea, rolling terrible and unheard beside him, struck his face and tongue. But when he

gained the little stone steps leading up to the apex of the breakwater, he found that the last wave had only left it wet and rather slippery, and knowing that the tide had not yet fully flowed in ; and knowing also that assistance lay before him at the station, a quarter of a mile distant ; and feeling assured now that he must be on Peter's track, hurried up the uneven stones, as another curling, white-tongued wave swept under his feet and enveloped him in its spray.

He stood on the top of the breakwater. The wind rose and fell by fits and starts ; but the sea was not minded to calm down after its vigorous upheaval. Far before him, on his right, the lights of the coastguard station showed unsteadily. One ray fixed the little, lonely figure, standing between dark sea and darker sky. But Willie was trying to penetrate the unfathomable darkness that lay between that light and him, to the west ; and was trying to follow, with his eyes, the faint line of the lower cliff path, cut in chalk and bordered by rock.

His way lay along that path ; and since the tide was fast flowing in to full, Willie knew he had no time to lose. If Peter were not at the end of this weary pathway, Willie knew his part was to mount the cliff again, returning home by way of the coastguard's and the upper road, to seek the lost one there. Another blast shook the universe, and there was heard, faintly, through the noise of wind and out of the darkness, a gun from a ship in distress. Willie slipped and scrambled down the steps the other side, and, running ankle deep through the rushing foam of the last wave, gained the pathway under the cliff.

A man, going at high pressure, could hardly have reached that pathway's end, and the ascending steps to the coastguard's station, before the path itself should be covered and the cliffs washed to the height of his own shoulders. But to Willie, nothing was too fearsome to be ventured on that night of vain, sad effort, and he had not time to measure the unconsidered length of the way. Long before the ship at sea sent out her

second signal of distress—but not before Peter was lying in his mother's arms again—the tide had swept off his feet, and into the sea's turbulent depths, him who was charged with the care of the Steele flock, that they should not go astray.

The ray of light that fixed, from far off, Willie's figure, as it stood tossed between earth and Heaven, showed it so, for one instant, to one at the end of a telescope within the station's shelter. He tells the tale to this day, and paints the unforgotten picture of Willie in homely words, recalling him chiefly by his short skirts and small stature.

Nor is he out of words (though these are harder to extract) concerning the long and fruitless search for the shepherd himself, along shore as far as the rising tide permitted, after the little, far-off figure had dropped suddenly out of his range of vision—to be seen no more of men.

And that is the last picture we have of Little Steele, stepping out into the darkness, fearlessly on his own account, with what fears and dread anguish of suspense for his lost lamb we cannot know.

Nor can be told what power of steadfast purpose pushed him on to seek Peter, in the face of impossibility; nor what manner of self-sacrificing instinct bade him still go forward to fulfil his charge, and not return until he had found his lamb and brought it home.

Nor how and when the piteous moment arrived when the little feet, being overtaken by the sea, stopped still for ever.

All that is ours is that picture of Little Steele as he stood on the borderland of the eternal shore, trying to pierce the darkness, who was soon to see the light everlasting—Little Steele, in his speckled frock and hose, his weather-beaten boots, and his hair flying in the wind.

At times—for the tale is not yet old—a woman, with swollen eyelids and sunken eyes, is seen to pace up and down that cliff-girt, rock-hewn path, until her tired feet can go no

further step. A fisherman, out with the boats at sea, sometimes shades his eyes from the sun, and gazes, long and sorrowfully, over the wide waters: but neither the woman nor the fisherman ever find what they seek. And it is said, also, that they will not find it until the earth and the heavens are rolled away and the sea gives up its dead.

K. DOUGLAS KING.

Nature.

SHE whom I loved, not human in degree,
 And so I deemed unchanging, is no more
 Worthy my trust, nor shall a thought restore
 This wistful heart its love ; and Time shall see
 No mystic midnight draw her back to me,
 With whom my lovely sojournings are o'er !
 Nay, of the very light she loves to pour
 Warm on the world, my spirit would be free !

For once, when she the whole day long had smiled,
 Tuning her murmurous insect strings, my ear
 Caught the swift sob of human anguish wild ;
 When I besought her aid, and drew her near,
 Lo, she I dreamed omnipotent stood there
 Blind, deaf, and dumb, beside a moaning child.

WINIFRED M. LUCAS

The Abbey of St. Albans.

FOUNDING a Monastery in this England of ours, in the year of grace 700, was not exactly the simple operation it is upon the verge of the year 1900. The country, occupied by a population less numerous than that of Yorkshire in our day, and in general character not much more reclaimed, or much less ferocious than the nineteenth century Matabele or Zulus, was only nominally Christian, and scarcely nominally civilised. No doubt, Christian preachers had been established a couple of centuries. But, except the few Monasteries, they were for the most part grouped, and wisely so, around the settlements of the chiefs, and the more isolated regions lay in primeval barbarism. Now, it was mainly in these barbarous wildernesses that the ancient Monks established themselves.

It was in what an enterprising modern house agent would describe as a locality so desirable and salubrious as this, that in the year 793 Offa, the King of the Midlands, planted a colony of Benedictine Monks. The place was absolutely desolate, and settled population there was none. In the neighbourhood had once been the Roman town of Verulam, the scene of the death of St. Alban, the first Martyr of Britain. But Saxon ferocity had reduced Verulam to a heap of ruins three centuries before. Now its wrecked buildings sheltered nothing but the beasts of prey, the felon, and the outlaw, whilst the country around had relapsed into the unquestioned dominion of the wild pig, the stag, the wolf, and the fox. A desirable locality indeed, in the language of our friend the house agent; and one is almost

tempted to ask, What did a colony of missionaries want in such a place? For an answer to that question, look around you upon the fair England of to-day.

A wise man in his generation was King Offa. He had probably heard of what Verulam once was. It is more than probable that what Verulam had been, he designed it to be again, and he knew that these grandsons of St. Benedict were the men for the work. The land would be reclaimed, agriculture would first arise and then flourish; means of subsistence would become sure; under the sacred teachings religion, justice and good order would exert their benign influence; and with solid attractions like these, King Offa, perhaps, reckoned with confidence that English instinct for a good thing would soon draw inhabitants. In varying degrees and proportions, that is what happened throughout the length and breadth of England. Under the hands of the first monastic colony, the wilderness bloomed into a garden; men gathered from far and near to exchange oppression and penury for security and comfort; the community, thriving upon its beneficence, develops into an Abbey, and presently spreads abroad colonies or Priories of its own; the Abbey or Priories throw out into all the districts around detached cells, or vicarages; in Abbey, in Priory, in cell, or vicarage the useful arts, and agriculture above all, march hand in hand with religion. And so the work goes on, through the seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries, ever widening in sweep, ever adapting its organisation to the growing complexity of the nation's life; until the Abbeys have become the centre of cities, the Priories of towns, the vicarage cells of cultivated parishes. In a word, the barbarous Anglo-Saxon tribes have been welded into the Christian people of England, and, under God, it is the Monks of St. Benedict who have wrought the changes. Having given this bird's-eye view of a national transformation more stupendous than ever was fabled of Aladdin's lamp, it is my object, as already stated, to attempt some imperfect sketch of its operation

in detail, in one specific instance. For that purpose, we must transport ourselves mentally back to the spot once known as Verulam. This, as we have seen, was the site selected by King Offa for his great experiment. That experiment we shall endeavour to follow through its varying phases and through the development of its history. We shall see the pioneer colony in the waste become first a prosperous Monastery, surrounded by cultivated lands and a settled population ; then a great Abbey, with a pile of stately buildings, and in time the centre of an important town. We shall find its colonies spread through the heart and brain, as it were, of a highly complex and extensive system of administration, monastic, civil, and manorial. We shall see it mature into a home of the arts and a great seat of learning. We shall see its Abbots famed among English patriots ; we shall see men honoured with the confidence of kings, of statesmen, and of Saints ; reverenced for scholarship, for charity, and for fearless championship of religion ; we shall see them seated upon the throne of St. Augustine. Finally—sad climax to such a history—we shall part from them, almost under the shadow of that calamity before which fell all our English Monasteries, the innocent victims of that Feudal system which the alleviations devised by the Church, and mainly by the Religious Orders within the Church, had alone rendered tolerable for so long.

This is a fair picture, and if I should fail to reproduce it to your imagination so vividly as you might desire, the fault is with me, not with the picture. That is there all the same, but only a master-hand can reillumine its ancient splendour. In respect of my subject, I have the misfortune to be a kind of pioneer myself. No historian, so far as I know, has ever trodden the ground before. There is nothing to walk upon but the official chronicle of the Abbey. And here is the difficulty. Our old monastic chroniclers wrote in Latin, and they related facts and events in the baldest outline. From these

scant materials, to reconstruct the vivid drama of a Society long since dead, to reclothe its actors with flesh and blood, and to display them in all the vigour of action, would require the genius and the leisure of a Lingard, a Newman, or a Lecky. For the few spare hours of a busy life the task is too much, and I can only bespeak your indulgence in advance. One word more of preliminary, with respect to the trustworthiness of the source from which my observations must be drawn. It is entitled "The Acts of the Abbots of the Monastery of St. Albans." It is preserved in the National Record Office, in the original manuscript which bears upon its face the evidence of its having been faithfully kept from generation to generation. The work has been published in the original Latin, by direction of the Privy Council, under the supervision of the Master of the Rolls ; and if the transparent sincerity of the narrative—its candour as to shortcomings and trials, as well as its modest recital of triumphs, were not sufficient guarantee of authenticity, that would be amply established by the testimony of the official editor. So much said by way of preface. It only remains to portray to you, with such imperfect skill as I may, the men, the life, the work, and the multiform activity of the great Abbey of St. Albans, as they presented themselves to the eyes of mediæval England.

The "Acts of the Abbots" opens right in the middle of things with this sentence : "To Willegod the first Abbot, in the year 793, Offa, King of Mercia, delivered the Church endowed with wide domains and many privileges, and peopled with Monks chosen for their sanctity from far and near, to be governed according to the rule of St. Benedict." Then, having seen his monastic colony firmly planted (I am still quoting official record), Offa set out for Rome, in order that, as he had distinguished it in England with temporalities and Royal favours so at Rome he might ennable it with spiritual and ecclesiastical privileges ; and from the Roman Pontiff then reigning, Adrian I., he obtained

many franchises, giving force and validity for all time to those conferred by himself. It is not, perhaps, strictly germane to our subject. Still, whilst we have King Offa in Rome, and like a frolicsome youth on his holidays, making the money fly, we may be permitted to note, as not altogether without interest for ourselves, just one instance of what he did with it. Having secured for his cherished Monastery the crowning sanction and safeguard of Papal authority, the King (so the chronicle proceeds) "piously founded in Rome a hospice for pilgrims from all parts of the world . . . for the support of which he granted the tax known as Peter's Penny, to be levied over the greater part of his kingdom. . . . Whence that tax has assumed through all England the name of Peter's Pence." From Willegod, the first Abbot, to Wulnoth, the fourth in succession, the chronicle can find nothing worth relating. Conquering the wilderness, clearing the forest, and reducing waste land by drainage and labour into a state of cultivation, were not the kind of thing an early Benedictine put into his note-book—if he had one. They were in the daily routine, and went without saying. But something took place in Wulnoth's time that was worth noting. The Danes burst over England just as they burst over France, like so many Zulus or Matabele; the land smoked with blazing ruins from Durham to London; and no man, woman, or child could escape massacre except by timely flight into the recesses of the forest. The chronicler deplores the sad results to religion and morality, and Lingard declares, quite frankly, that the population relapsed into the ferocity of their ancestors.

The Monasteries, it is scarcely necessary to observe, suffered especially. Not one was left unburnt, and, among the rest, St. Albans. When this happened, further than that it was during the Abbacy of Wulnoth, there is nothing to show. Our early chroniclers appear to have had a modern student's aversion for dates. Lingard describes the pillaging of Lindisfarne, Jarrow, Croylands, and Ely; but after searching the "History" and

the "Antiquities" I can find no allusion to St. Albans. You see the establishment was as yet a kind of conventional baby, too young for special mention. But it was probably about the year 870, or seventy-seven years after Offa's foundation. It was at this time that Halfdene, who had sacked Paris in his time, marched from Wiltshire with similar designs on London ; and, as our gentle Danes displayed for Monasteries a predilection as marked as the cannibals of New Zealand are said to have displayed for boiled missionary, the pleasant fields of the rising Monastery would not escape attention from the forage parties. Matters were now at this mournful pass that, in less than eighty years from its beginning, a work undertaken for the glory of God and the good of men, was completely destroyed. Everything had to be done over again. As soon as order was re-established under Alfred, we can imagine such few Monks as had escaped the massacre gradually making their way back to the old home ; presently reconstituting themselves as a Religious Community, running up some kind of temporary cloister and chapel, and slowly bringing the land back to cultivation. Here we get once more into touch with our chronicler. He describes the process of reclamation and settlement, and, to my mind, this is one of the most interesting parts of an interesting volume. We have but to bear in mind that at Evesham, Abingdon, Bary, Croyland, Ely, Lindisfarne, and at a dozen other points, similar operations were in progress, and we begin to understand the methods by which England was led from heathenism to Christianity and civilisation. It was in the reign of Wulsin, the sixth Abbot, that the work began in earnest. He, we are told—and the circumstance illustrates the methods of our ancient chroniclers—"developed the district, attracted inhabitants from outlying regions, promoted the welfare of the people, established ample market rights, and built three churches—St. Peter's to the north, St. Stephen's to the south, and St. Michael's to the west."

And now we begin to get a glimpse of the strong side of the monastic system, in its continuity of purpose. One man went down in death: but a successor stepped into the gap and his work went on. Alfric, the seventh Abbot; Ealdred, the eighth; Eadman, the ninth; Alfred the Second, the eleventh; and Leofstan, the twelfth, all carried forward the labours of Wulsin in the spirit of the beautiful words of Mr. Ruskin upon the early painters. They gave not alone of the body's labour, but of soul's travail, working on to death with no thought of their own distinction, but merely acting their allotted part in a great project, and leaving the glory of completion to whomsoever it might befall. But, while acting upon the lines laid down by Wulsin, each of the Abbots named made some particular departure peculiar to his own time; and Alfric, the next in succession to Wulsin, found a great stumbling-block in an extensive lake that lay outside the monastic lands. It was named, in the quaint early spelling, "Fischpol," and belonged to King Eogan, whose name also serves us for a landmark. We must now be somewhere about the year 950. This lake was used for supplying the Court, and was accordingly much frequented by Royal retainers. You see, Billingsgate was not an institution in King Eogan's time, and, later than this, a present of four-and-twenty Yarmouth herrings was deemed a fair price for a town's charter of incorporation. Now, if the humble bloater was a dainty dish to set before a king, fresh perch, tench, pike, and possibly trout from the "Fischpol" were sure to be in request. Accordingly, the influx of the King's retainers was constant and numerous. The peasantry were subjected to continual oppression. What was worse, the disorderly lives led were a perpetual bad example. So Alfric laid the case before the King, and having for consideration got the place transferred to the Abbey, he ended the lake and the scandal together and for ever with one stroke. He had it drained from end to end, and in a few years the sheet of water gave place to a tract of fertile land, with which brilliant

piece of administration Alfric passed away, and Ealdred stood in his place.

Alfric II., the eleventh Abbot, found the Royal burgh of Kingsbury a source of irritation. It skirted the Abbey lands, and was mainly inhabited by privileged retainers of the Court, whose privilege, as usual, took the form of making themselves a nuisance to their unprivileged neighbours. So Alfric II. imitated the example of his namesake and predecessor about the "Fischpol." He effected a purchase of the burgh and of six other townships from the King, and, in the terse language of the chronicle, "reduced the turbulent inhabitants to law-abiding and industrious life." Alfric probably had short ways with turbulence. Leofstan, the twelfth Abbot, closes a grand list of pioneers. He added to the lands already reclaimed ; but being also a man, as the chronicle puts it, "of simple, pious character," he was moved with pity by the dangers that encompassed travellers and pilgrims to St. Albans—for the Monks, it should be stated, believed themselves to be in possession of the Martyr's body. Perhaps, also, Leofstan took a statesmanlike view of the benefits sure to result from opening up the country. At all events, he had the roads improved and rendered safe ; he cleared the dense woodland stretching on the east almost to London, had bridges erected, and the highways levelled and set in repair. This great achievement worthily ends a brilliant record of civilising labour, extending, in unbroken continuity, over 160 years. I have dwelt upon the period at some length, because it has seemed to me to throw too strong a light upon the means by which England was reclaimed from heathen barbarism to be passed over with a mere allusion. The period ended with Leofstan, and henceforward we shall have to survey the Abbey in its monastic, ecclesiastical, and administrative relations, and in its influence upon the higher life of the nation.

We are now upon the verge of the Norman Conquest, but before we pass forward two figures rise pre-eminent from the

Anglo-Saxon epoch to claim some notice. One of these is Leofric the tenth Abbot, who deserves a wider fame and a deeper veneration than any poor words of mine can give him. In his time—probably it was about the end of the tenth century—there fell upon England one of those calamities that try the fibre of men. The land was desolated from end to end by famine. Now was the time for the sons of St. Benedict to make good their claim to the glorious title of the “Servants of the servants of God.” Thank God, the Church never has been wanting in such a crisis, and the spirit of Leofric rose within him sublime to the ordeal. It was a saying of his that Christ’s faithful, and especially the poor, are the Church and temple of God, and to be particularly built up and preserved. A beautiful ideal, and nobly realised. Not, of course, that it was altogether original. St. Lawrence, as you know, before going to his flaming gridiron, met a demand for the Church treasures by getting together all the sick and the destitute, and commanding them to the covetous Roman as the Church’s most precious possessions. In a similar spirit Leofric, calling together the Community addressed them, reminding them of the example set by St. Lawrence, and quoting those terrible denunciations uttered by St. James and St. John against indifference to the sufferings of the poor. Then he set to work. First the treasury was emptied. Then the rare antiquities went. Then the better furnishings of the Monastery were sold; next, the church was stripped of its gold and silver ornaments; finally, the very sacred vessels were sold from the altar, and there was not left anything more valuable than lead or tin to serve as a chalice for the Holy Sacrifice. Everything had gone that anybody could be induced to buy—gone for the love of God and for the service of God’s poor, and the great Abbey and its inmates stood shorn gloriously bare, but, we may humbly assume, more acceptable to their Divine Master than in the proudest day of worldly grandeur. You will be surprised to hear that St. Albans,

great as it was, became too small after this to hold Abbot Leofric ; and when he was called, amid the acclaims of a people that would have kissed his feet, to ascend the throne of St. Augustine, you will probably agree with me that not the sainted Becket himself was a worthier occupant.

The second grand figure of the Anglo-Saxon epoch is Frederic, the thirteenth Abbot. He was the last of the Saxons, and a glorious last. He and Leofric should occupy niches side by side. One was the hero of charity, the other was the hero of patriotism—Christian patriotism. Whilst he ruled the Abbey, the Normans burst upon England, and every Englishman worthy the name had to stand for his country. Then the Abbey passed as honourably through the dread ordeal of war as we have seen it pass through the ordeal of famine. As the danger grew, all England learned to know that there swelled a soldier's heart under the Monk's cowl of Abbot Frederic, and his capacity and devotion carried him among earls and Thanes to high command in the English host. "He was a trusted leader of the English," says the chronicle, in its bald, mere-fact-style ; and, until all hope was lost, more by the want of a settled point of national unity, after the death of Harold, than by the reverse in arms, what man could do he did. Then Abbot Frederic, with the rest, had to make his submission. What had been the value of his service to England we can only gauge—and it is no light test—by the hatred with which the Conqueror ever after pursued him. One exaction upon the Abbey followed another, until Frederic, who thoroughly understood that he was the object aimed at through the trust committed to him, seeing no prospect of the persecution ending, determined to exile himself for the sake of his brethren. "Brethren and sons," he said, calling the Community together, "according to the Scripture maxim, we must fly from persecution from one country to another." Then he quietly announced his purpose, and leaving the spot endeared to him by so many

associations, natural and spiritual, he went forth a fugitive to lay his bones among strangers. The Monks of Ely received him ; and he who had commanded an English army, and ruled a great Abbey, became a simple Monk, for God's sake and his country's. And now there awaited the valiant exile an ordeal more bitter than defeat in battle. It was the sense of impotence to stem the miseries grinding his fellow-countrymen to the earth. What those miseries were, those of you who have read your "Ivanhoe" may dimly realise if you try to imagine thirty or forty thousand *Front-de-Boeufs* ravaging the land, each with his force of ruffian retainers, to dispossess the people and reduce them to servitude. The chronicle gives a sad picture of the state to which England was now degraded. "Evils," it says, "began to be multiplied in the land, verifying the vision of St. Edward the King, who saw the Seven Sleepers (of Ephesus) turning from right to left—an omen of calamities in England. Pillage, hatred, pride, midnight gamblings, gluttonies, luxury, debaucheries, false swearing, became horribly prevalent. Wherever agitation broke out, there banditti roamed at large. Midnight gambling, with profane swearing—hitherto rare among the English—begot brawls and homicide." Then, we are told, people began to use bolts and bars, and to live as though in daily dread of siege ; and it is noted that from this time the practice of fastening doors and windows at night became fast rooted as a national custom. "Prayers," the writer continues, "as against imminent peril of shipwreck, were said by the head of the family. At the barricading of the entrance or window the *Benedicite* and *Dominus* were reverently recited. Which custom has come through to our own day"—or three centuries later. From which narrative it is clear that the Norman irruption was not less fearful in its effects upon the national character than had been the Danish inroads before it. It was the last drop in the cup of Abbot Frederic's misery. He whose spirit had soared with chivalrous ardour over the battle-field, and had faced the reverses of war with undaunted calm,

recoiled from the sight of murderous oppression and rapine that his hand was powerless to stay. His heart broke, and death gave him a welcome release. Frederic was not the last Abbot of St. Albans, as we shall see, to ennable his habit, his Order, and his Faith with greatness of soul in the hour of England's need. That, however, we must not anticipate. We now pass from the Saxon time, and I, for my part, take leave of its earnest pioneers, and its heroic exemplars of charity and love of country, with reverent and admiring regret; but also with pride that I, too, though unworthily, profess the religion adorned by their virtues, their genius, and their valour.

It will easily be understood that, under the peculiar circumstances of the time, the transition from the Saxon to the Norman period was one of difficulty for the Abbey, as it was for the rest of England. What was worse, for a considerable number of years after the abdication of Frederic, the Community seems to have been without an Abbot, and this could not fail to exercise a bad influence upon discipline. Since a successor was not appointed until 1077, it would appear that the interregnum lasted about ten years; and, in passing, it may be noted that the new *régime* did introduce one improvement: henceforward the date is recorded of each succeeding Abbot's inauguration. The reasons for the prolonged vacancy are not far to seek, though the chronicle says nothing about them. The Conqueror, as you know, introduced into England the Feudal system, under which every large proprietor of lands held directly from the King, and did military service for them. In respect of their proprietorial character, and with an eye to the military service due from the population upon their lands, Bishops and heads of Monasteries had to receive Royal investiture of their temporalities; and after the experience he had had from Abbot Frederic of what could be done in the military line by a patriotic Englishman, we may quite safely assume that William would invest none, but a supporter of his now with

command of resources so extensive as those of St. Alban's Abbey. It was a delicate matter to adjust ; but Archbishop Lanfranc at last adjusted it by installing a kinsman of his own, whom he brought over from one of the French houses of St. Benedict. His name was Paul, and he became the fourteenth Abbot. He appears to have been in every respect a good Abbot. The chronicle records of him that "he reformed abuses, restored discipline, and revived the great repute of the house." Then he stopped, or, as the chronicler figuratively expresses it, "reined in the eating of flesh food, and changed the dress ; but taking care to proceed by degrees, lest haste had provoked resistance, and the obstinacy of seniors habituated to indulgence had bred discord." From which it would seem that Abbot Paul might give lessons in the practical art of *savoir faire* to some modern reformers. *Suaviter in modo, fortiter in re*, was his motto. His process was slow, but his rules were strict. How strict, may be gathered from this one sentence : "Even in the infirmary, the eating of flesh food was forbidden to all except to such as manifestly needed it by reason of great prostration or serious illness. And even in the infirmary the hours of silence must be scrupulously observed." It is also recorded of him—and I should suppose from the fact that it was a new departure—that he commanded that a waxlight be kept incessantly burning before the High Altar.

The pioneering epoch of the Abbey was now closed. England had become a civilised country ; society had developed its organisation, and the Monasteries, laying aside their missionary character, had now to adapt their work to the needs of civilised life, among a people divided into classes as we know them to-day. I find that in Abbot Paul's time, the Priories, or colonies of the Abbey, extended as far north as Tynemouth, on the west, as is clear from later references ; they reached the Welsh frontier, and in all they cannot have numbered less than a dozen—ex-

clusive, of course, of vicarages, which were numerous enough to fill a couple of modern dioceses. And we may judge of the high repute in which the Abbey was held by the fact that a Monk of the Tynemouth Priory was elected to be Abbot of Selby ; one of the St. Albans brethren was similarly elevated by the Community of Croylands, and another was received as Prior in Westminster Abbey. Over all this extensive system of ecclesiastical administration the Abbots had to preside, besides exercising the multitudinous duties of extensive manorial proprietors, which involved them in much magisterial and judicial work. If to this we add the government of the Abbey itself, with its three hundred Monks or more ; the constant supervision of discipline there, as well as in the distant priories, and the vicarages of them all ; in addition to the administration of a great system of public charity, it will be apparent that the Abbot of a great English Monastery in the Middle Ages needed to be a man of no common capacity. In dealing with this second half of the history of the Abbots, I shall not trouble myself much with their administrative or judicial work. For me, what I will call the human side of their history has a greater charm—their zeal for monastic discipline and fervour ; for the diffusion of religion through the land ; their constant care for learning ; and their noble guardianship of the poor.

We have seen Abbot Paul making a good start in respect of discipline. His regulations were confirmed by the great St. Anselm, and, except for relaxations necessitated by circumstances, they were never afterwards allowed to flag. Paul had set discipline upon a sound footing ; and being, as the chronicle says, "a lover of the Scriptures," and of letters, he introduced into the Abbey the system of transcribing books. He was not altogether the first. Alfric II., whom we have seen curbing the turbulent people of Kingsbury, also found leisure to compose a metrical history of St. Alban, and to set it to music—an early

instance of the sacred cantata. But Paul may be said to have laid the foundation of that systematic accumulation of books by transcription which made the Abbey a great centre for the spreading of knowledge through England. Paul having provided for discipline and learning, his immediate successors made the great monastic virtue of charity their especial care. With the glorious example of Leofric before him, an Abbot of St. Albans was never likely to forget the poor. So it was that Richard, the fifteenth Abbot, and Paul's successor, set aside two parts of all the tithes of the Abbey for the benefit of the poor. Abbot Geoffrey, his successor, who was elected in 1119, continued this regulation, and commanded, moreover, that every year, on the patronal Feast of the Abbey, three hundred poor persons should be fed. It should, of course, be remembered that these regulations are in addition to the custom, surviving in every Monastery to our own day from the earliest ages, of making a daily distribution of the broken meat among the poor. In an Abbey inhabited by several hundreds of persons, this in itself would be a considerable daily alms. It is worth noting that Geoffrey had been a schoolmaster at Dunstable. What kind of school he taught there is nothing to show; but it would be one for "Grammar" or classics. We sometimes hear of retrospective legislation, but the Elementary Education Acts had scarcely retrospected as far as Dunstable in the early part of the twelfth century. Besides making generous provision for the poor, Geoffrey built a hospital for lepers, under the title of St. Julian, and the simple, unaffected piety of the time appears in the act of dedication: "This charity was founded for the repose of the souls—of Offa, our Founder, and glorious King of Mercia; of Paul, Richard, and Geoffrey, Abbots—the last, the author of this foundation, for any sins of commission and omission, and for any imperfect discharge of spiritual duty, whether of prayer or almsgiving, which may attach to this church through the absorption of the Community in their special

avocations." He also built a new infirmary, renewing Abbot Paul's interdict against flesh food there, except in grave cases ; and added even a prohibition against Monks from the cloister visiting the sick brethren. From which, you will gather that it was a serious matter to be a sick Monk in an old English Monastery. Of Radulf, the seventeenth Abbot, A.D. 1146, it is only recorded that in early life he had been a distinguished disciple of Wodonus, the Italian, lecturer in Holy Scripture of Lincoln Cathedral. The fact of an Italian holding such an office furnishes another interesting proof of the zeal of the Holy See to promote Biblical studies in the Middle Ages. Under Robert, the eighteenth Abbot, there occurred an incident which acquires a curious interest in the light of subsequent events. There one day presented himself to the Abbot a young man who requested to be received as a novice. His credentials were good, and everything was satisfactory but one. He was set to pass his entrance examination, and was "plucked"; but as he looked a promising youth, the Abbot encouraged him to prosecute his studies and apply again. The young man did not apply again. Instead of that he went to Paris, took Orders ; went to Valentia ; went to Rome ; rose high ; rose higher ; rose to the highest elevation created man can attain. In short, who do you think this unsuccessful postulant was ? It was one Nicholas Brakespere, whom the world shall know to the end of time as Adrian IV., the only Englishman who ever sat upon the throne of St. Peter. When this happened, A.D. 1154, Abbot Robert had the honour of being deputed by Henry II. to congratulate his rejected postulant of other days. It must have been a strange meeting ; and, closeted alone together, it is not difficult to imagine His Holiness indulging himself in jestful memories at the expense of a certain blockhead of a lad who failed in his entrance examination. When friends and acquaintance speak at large about uneducated Monks, we might tell them the story of the great

Pope who could not pass for a postulant in an English Monastery. However, it was only natural that the Pope should bestow some mark of favour upon his old friend and the Community he had never been privileged to join. From this time the Abbots of St. Albans rank as mitred Abbots; and by virtue of this dignity, Abbot Robert took precedence, in the Council of Tours, of all the Abbots of England and peers of the realm. Simon followed Robert, and he is another of the fine figures in the history of the Monastery.

We have seen Abbot Paul's zeal for learning. Simon worthily supplemented his efforts. It is related of him that "as soon as installed in office, being a literary man, as well as a godly, he lost no time in having the best books, and authentic versions, with glossary, of the Old and New Testaments, turned out in a style which could not be surpassed." It is also noted that, like his predecessor Paul, he was an ardent student of Holy Scripture. But Simon's glory shines from a higher source even than this. In his time there took place, between St. Thomas of Canterbury and King Henry, that fearful struggle for the rights of the Church; and even great Saints, though standing heroically alone against enormous odds, need one kindred spirit to share their sorrows and to whisper consolation. That friend St. Thomas found in Abbot Simon, who stood fearlessly by his side in every crisis. The chronicle, in its bald way, relates that the Abbot was "the chief friend and counsellor of St. Thomas in his struggle with the King, and when news of the Martyr's death (which the latter had predicted to his friend) arrived at the Abbey, Simon, beside himself with grief, exclaimed: 'Alas for my unworthiness, that I was not found deserving to die with him; nor even worthy, in this his cause, to lose so much as a limb.'" In 1183 we have Warin, the twentieth Abbot, and he makes yet another departure in the corporal works of mercy. As Geoffrey had built a hospital for leprous men, Warin built another for leprous women; and again we find a reaffirmation of

that stern regulation on the subject of flesh foods, even in the infirmary, with just one relaxation, that a few of the Monks, who were obviously much debilitated, and yet refused to relinquish their duties for the sick list, were permitted to eat flesh meat. Even they, however, must upon no account eat it in the general refectory. They must go into an apartment by themselves. On fast-days, however, the Abbot allowed the midday siesta after refection. John, the twenty-first Abbot, A.D. 1195, had been a classical teacher of note in the University of Paris before his entrance into the Monastery. In his time, the struggle took place between King John and his Barons, and between the King and the Pope, and the Abbot became honourably involved in it. When John made the kingdom a tributary of the Holy See, the chronicle deplores the surrender of national independence. But the Abbot knew how to distinguish between English politics and the spiritual obedience due to the Holy See ; and when the King called upon him to continue the celebration of Mass despite the Papal interdict, the Abbot addressed his Chapter in these words : " Brethren, it behoves us to obey God rather than men ; let us bear the anger of the Prince." And they did. Rather than disobey the Pope in spirituals, the Community suffered the punishment of having the Abbey lands placed in sequestration. Abbot John's death-bed was a spectacle for Angels and for men. " Full of years," as the chronicle relates, " and feeling his end approach, the Abbot, having summoned the Community in Chapter, was assisted to the door, whence with difficulty he made his way to his seat. Thence he addressed the Community as follows :

" ' Dear Brethren and Sons,—Some time I was among you, was before your eyes, and, which was less fitting, was in authority over you. Now, since no man is without sin and manifold offence, if I have wronged any one among you, I beseech, with clasped hands and upon my knees, that for God's sake, and as He commanded, you will forgive me every offence, and, so far as in you lies, absolve me from all my sins.' " Then the Abbot

hall placed in the centre a low stool, called a "judicium." You see "the stool of repentance" is not entirely of Scotch extraction. Upon this stool he seated himself, and desiring each Monk to give him a single stroke of the discipline, he stripped himself to the skin. When the Brethren saw his body, so worn and emaciated that the bones almost protruded, they wept in compassion; and going up to him, each in order, they, one and all, gave him a single stroke of the discipline, as he had desired, using it, however, with gentleness. whilst the Abbot recited the *Confiteor* and the *Misereatur*. Then rising and bowing to the Community, he spoke his last *Vale*, and with the support of the brethren, necessitated by his weakness, made his way to the infirmary, where he was solemnly anointed and received the Viaticum. Which over, he said, "All is completed," and after receiving the kiss of peace from each one present, he added : "I leave you, never to return. Let us all supplicate Almighty God—you for me, I for you. My course is done." So saying, he was led, or rather dragged, to his room. Three days later he died. It is noted of him that he was a man of high attainments in medicine. The election and career of the next Abbot are interesting for several reasons. They illustrate the relations between the Church and the Crown, and the evils latent in lay patronage. But they also display the prudent common-sensibleness of the English character, and they likewise establish the truth that it is not always well to measure a man's value by the errors of his early conduct. When Abbot John died the Royal licence had to be obtained for electing his successor; and as the Sovereign, or his Prime Minister for him, does to-day in the case of this licence for nominally electing an Anglican Bishop, the King accompanied it with an intimation that none but William de Trompington would be acceptable to himself. The Community had already defied King John once, as we have seen, in the matter of the interdict; and as they had no desire to incur a second sequestration, if it could be conscientiously avoided, they elected the Royal nominee,

hoping for the best. But when they saw his unedifying and worldly-minded behaviour, the shocked Seniors met together to discuss remedies. "Deservedly are we afflicted," they said one to another. "The election sinned against the Church, in that we showed greater fear of the King than of the law." But one of them, older in years and ripe in judgment, reminded his brethren of the violent persecution which defiance of the King must have entailed. He counselled patience for the present, in the hope that the Abbot might reform his life: if not, then they could adopt stronger measures. The wisdom of this advice was amply proved by the sequel. As a first step, the grieved Seniors deputed one of their number to reprove the Abbot publicly in Chapter. Then, as Shakspere says of the roistering Prince Hal, who really seems to have had many traits of character in common with Abbot William, it became apparent "that his vanities forespent were but the outside of the Roman Brutus, hiding discretion beneath a coat of folly." In short, his faults sprang from buoyancy of uncorrected animal spirits; his heart was sound, and that admonition, given with filial grief, touched it. Still using the beautiful words of Shakspere: "Consideration, like an Angel came, and whipped the offending Adam out of him." He had the manliness to make a contrite answer, and his reward was exceeding great. To adapt the language of another poet, we shall have the pleasure of seeing Abbot William rising upon stepping-stones of his dead self to higher things, governing his Monastery with distinction, and at his death leaving a memory treasured in grateful hearts. He governed in a trying time. The war of the interdict raged, and the Abbey was alternately the prey of John and Louis. But he was an Englishman to the core, and we have again the satisfaction of finding a resolute patriot in the Monk. Frederic had led his countrymen in arms; John though a devoted son of the Holy See, had deplored the making of England its tributary in temporal matters; William defied

the French invader to his teeth. Called upon to pay a large subsidy and to swear allegiance to Louis, under threat of having the Monastery burned down, he found the money; but, in respect of fealty, he told the invader to his face that he had sworn all the allegiance in his composition to King John, and, burn the Monastery or not burn it, he had not another atom of allegiance to place at the disposal of any foreigner breathing. The Frenchman elected to take the money. William attended the General Council of Lateran in 1215, and it was upon a question there publicly propounded by him, for which he received the thanks of all the English Abbots and of many foreigners, that the Council, after deliberation, and with the consent of the Pope, granted the privilege to any church possessed of the authenticated remains of any Saint, to invoke that Saint's name in the secret of the Mass. During William's time there occurred an incident which throws into terrible relief the rudeness of the age. Alexander de Langley, the keeper of the Abbot's seal, and a man noted for his literary accomplishments, had the misfortune to go mad—perhaps from "much learning." He used to go into alternate fits of moody abstraction and high-flown declamation; so the Abbot had him flogged, to drive the devil out of him, and had him removed to a distant Priory, where he died in fetters, which were buried with him. It is better to be a lunatic in the nineteenth century than it was in the thirteenth. William did much to beautify the Abbey buildings, and it is noted that a deal of the work was done by members of the Community, skilled in carving and architecture. Zealous for discipline, he ordained that, from the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, or from September to Easter, "according to the rule of St. Benedict, which we profess," the Community, even upon solemn festivals, shall only take one meal a day. He economised in management in order that there might be more copious alms, and the crowning testimony to his worth came when, at his funeral, the poor, of whom it had

always been his custom, upon returning from a journey, to feed a number at the door, followed his bier with loud lamentation for the loss of such a pastor of soul and body. As I have already observed, it was a trying time, this of the French invasion, and matters were not vastly mended when John died, leaving his heir, a boy, to be made the puppet of scheming nobles. The Abbey was subjected by Court favourites to exactions amounting in the total to two thousand marks: notwithstanding which, the chronicle notes that John II., who succeeded Abbot William, relaxed nothing in the ordinary bounty or hospitality. John's rule lasted until the year 1260, and an entry in the chronicle makes this a suitable juncture for survey and retrospect.

The remains of some Monks buried a century or more had been disturbed, and the ashes were thought to be of remarkable fragrance and whiteness. This the chronicler attributes—and, no doubt, he merely reflects the views of the Community—to the austerity of the lives led by the dead, and he bewails the inroad of relaxation, quoting the words of St. Bernard, that "there is nothing more detestable to God than a Monk well fed, comfortably clothed, and stoutly shod, for these things are indications of pride." If we examine this self-reproach, I think we may extract from it a good deal of instruction, and not a little edification. The Monastery had now existed about five hundred years. Had it really lapsed into indulgence? Upon the next page to this lament we find it recorded that visitors, including the Bishop of Durham, pronounced the Convent beer "discreditable to the Community, and injurious to their stomachs," and assigned certain rents for its improvement. Now, it is worth while to understand what this beer was. The comforting ale of our day it could not be, for the simple reason that the use of hops had not yet been introduced from Flanders. Therefore, it could only be what we should term "small beer," and, according to the competent evidence of a Bishop, it was bad at that. We

may gather some idea of its quality from a description of the beer drunk by the Franciscans and Dominicans, who made their first appearance in England in this Abbot's time. This liquor, if it deserves the name, was so sour that it could only be drunk with water. In respect of their beverages, at any rate, there could be no cause for searchings of heart. How was it in other respects? We have seen that from September to Easter the Monks ate food only once a day, and never touched flesh meat, even when ordered to the infirmary, unless greatly prostrated, when it was probably injurious to their enfeebled stomachs; or seriously ill, when they probably could not touch it. That regulation was renewed thirty years later, with the addition that even physic was only to be used in grave emergency. It was not until nearly a century later that a Monk, seriously ill, was allowed to exchange the general bill of fare for anything that might tempt his appetite. We can now form some idea of their existence. Deprived of flesh food in a climate that imperatively requires it, and without even the vegetable substitutes available in our day; eating only once a day for half the year, and getting only one full meal, with one other slight refection, for the other half; never knowing the pleasure of unbroken sleep, by reason of the canonical hours; confined to a diet of bread which was not always good, with occasional treats of an egg or bit of cheese; unacquainted with vegetables, and drinking "small beer" of low quality—the life of the brethren, so far from showing laxity, may be described, humanly, as one of slow suicide. How miserable it was, even a hundred years later than this, may be gathered from the declaration of Abbot John de Naryus, the then Abbot. He took pains at least to have the bread of good quality, because, as he says, "having been reared in the Abbey, and having been compelled to notice the privations of the brethren—their insufficient sustenance, their arduous duties, and their exhaustion under labours that knew no relaxation—he had

often been moved to tears by the spectacle of their condition." In the light of this tribute to their austerity of life, self-reproach, upon the score of laxity, seems to me to strike a note of pathos the more deep because unconscious, and he must have a cold heart who can think of it without emotion. Such a state of things could not last. The climate was against it. Nature was against it. It was a sublime struggle of the soul against the imperative needs of the body; but from a purely physical standpoint the results were truly awful. How many scores, hundreds—aye, thousands, of promising young lives were prematurely destroyed, one shudders even to speculate. But in the spiritual order, it is one of the brightest glories of the old English Monks, that for six centuries, and under circumstances horrible to nature, they carried on a ceaseless struggle against the impossible. The case may be put in a nutshell. In hot climates, as you are doubtless aware, the bulk of the people live on a vegetable diet. It is so in Italy, and St. Benedict based his rule upon the usages of his own country. It was never designed for a cold Northern climate, where flesh food is essential to life, or for a people of hereditary flesh-eaters like the English. Upon this last point of hereditary habit there is conclusive evidence in our own day. An Englishman going to India, hot as the climate is, and attempting to revolutionise his system with a vegetable diet, is given up as a dead man from the start. For 999 out of every thousand men living in England itself, any medical man will tell you that vegetarianism—vastly different as is the vegetarianism of the nineteenth century from that of the fifteenth, when most of the vegetables familiar to us were unknown—is only another name for slow suicide. After violating the dictates of nature from the year 793 to about 1340, at a cost in human life that must have been fearful, the English Monks sorrowfully acknowledged this truth, and with a pathetic sense as of humiliation, they condescended to the weakness of preserving their own lives. Abbot Michael then instituted the practice of one

meal of flesh and one meal of fish, upon alternate days. But this meal, whether of fish or of flesh, was to be the only full meal of the day; and it was the dinner, or supper, and was taken late in the afternoon. In the morning they were allowed a little bread, with a drink of beer, except upon fast-days, and the fast-days in the old English Monasteries are one of the important points of this question of food. From the constitutions of Abbot Thomas, whose rule lasted until 1399, twelve years after which the chronicle closes, we gather that two days in every week, all the days of Lent and Advent—Sundays included—the five vigils of the Blessed Virgin, with, of course, the Ember days and general vigils of the Church, and, what the writer terms, the “winter fast,” which I cannot identify, were days upon which, besides being restricted to a single meal, the Community were forbidden to eat either flesh or any glutinous food. *Pinguitudo* is the Latin word, and I fancy it would exclude even eggs and cheese, as well as fish. That was fasting with a vengeance; and if you count up the days mentioned, you will find that they total up to nearly two hundred out of the 365. It only remains to add that the great rules of prayer, silence, labour, and alms-deeds survived to the end in full vigour. With respect to alms, it is recorded of Abbot Thomas, who died in 1399, that, being urged to reduce the alms fund, on account of the straitened resources of the Abbey, he rather increased the daily food distribution; and charity, begetting after its gracious kind, attracted such benefactions from the public that the alms fund became largely increased. As to the general life of the Monastery, study, reading, writing, annotating, correcting, and binding books were the staple employments. It is clear, also, from certain references, that the Community made careful study of jurisprudence. The artistic few illuminated, worked in metals, in music, in painting, and in architecture; and those who had no aptitude either for literary or art work, discharged the necessary works and business of the Abbey. Such were the old English

Monks : such their life, and such their work. When we contrast what they were with what he was, the unspeakable monster who destroyed them, may we not, indeed, with Othello, think of him as of one who, "like the base Judaean, threw a pearl away richer than all his tribe"?

I have been long, and I have endeavoured to give you at least a glimpse of many characters which I trust you will agree with me are noble in the truest sense of human nobility. There still remain two of the noblest, even in this brilliant hierarchy of noble minds. To sketch an outline, however bald, of the history of the Abbots of St. Albans, ignoring them, would be like playing *Hamlet* without the Prince. I had hoped to devote especial interest to this part of my subject, but the time will only admit of a rapid survey. One of these two Abbots was Richard of Wallingford, in many respects one of the most remarkable figures in the history of the Church or of the world. Born of poor parents, educated by the Monks, and elevated to the Abbey fresh from his Doctorate at Oxford, his life exemplifies, as none other in my limited knowledge exemplifies, the point of contact between human eminence and human tragedy ; between the highest intellectual exaltation and the lowest physical abasement ; and how all these incompatible elements, hallowed by religion, may combine to mould a character of the grandest stamp. An easy-going predecessor, who preferred a quiet life to conflict, had left to the young Abbot a fearful legacy of depredations committed upon the Abbey, as we may infer from the date, in the anarchic period of Isabella and her paramour Mortimer. To unravel all these interminable complications ; to recover every violated right ; laying his plans and devising his measures long in advance ; to restore the rigour of discipline ; travelling the length and breadth of England in investigation ; drafting constitutions ; stimulating his brother Abbots ; presiding over National Synods of his Order, and, withal, finding leisure for learned treatises, and even to in-

vent new astronomical instruments—this was the colossal life-work of Richard of Wallingsford ; and it was not rendered the easier by the intelligible jealousy of a section of the brethren towards one who had been their fellow-pupil and junior. But Abbot Richard was one of the spirits gentle, swift, and strong. His intellect towered giant-like above common men ; his heart stooped to the lowliest among them. He could weep with a brother penitent for fault corrected ; against the depredators of his Church he stood inflexible as steel. Nothing could daunt or turn him from his purpose, or weary him in the conflict. Every violated right and property invaded, he had the satisfaction of handing forward restored to his successor. And yet to think of it ! This giant among men was—the thing sounds incredible ; but it is true—he was a type ; transcendently gifted as he was, he yet bore in his body that most horrible of all contagions, which in every age and country has been mercilessly hounded from human society. He had been Abbot but a couple of years when the blow fell, and it fell in the dead of night. It seemed as if, in that solemn stillness of the dark most felt of sensitive souls, the Spirit of God had spoken : “ My servant, with powers of mind, with graces of soul, and with dignity exceeding great have I enriched thee more than other men. Take upon thee now the final seal of consecration in My suffering, and, as thy fidelity, so shall be the radiance of thy crown.” Then, as though branded in from the flame of Divine love itself, there seized upon the sleeping priest a scorching excruciation of unendurable agony, and shortly afterwards the tragedy was consummated. But, though carrying in his live body the corruptions of the grave, horribly disfigured in features, ever increasingly debilitated, and only redeemed from utter repulsiveness by the wondrous eyes that shone from out fetid sores like dazzling jewels upon a putrid corpse, heart and mind soared victorious over all ; and he who should have been an inmate of the leper hospital of his predecessors, so far subdued even enmity to

reverence, that when the Pope was requested to intervene for the leper's removal, the King himself joined with the brethren to implore that nothing might be done against one who was a blessing to his Monastery and a pride in England. It is pleasing to add that Richard the leper died a mitred Abbot and a peer of England ; and when, at last, the awful cross was taken from him by death, then the brethren found, from his secret manuals of devotion, that the genius and the afflictions of their Abbot had only been equalled by his sanctity.

Abbot Thomas de la Mare, the thirtieth Abbot, is the last grand figure of the chronicle, and, like Frederic among the Saxons, a glorious last. I said, at the outset, that Frederic was not the last Abbot of St. Albans to ennable his habit, his Order, and his Faith, with greatness of soul in the hour of England's need. If Geoffrey, dismantling his Monastery, Leofric-like, for the poor ; if John, bearding the King for Papal unity ; if Simon, à Becket's mainstay in the Church's battle ; and if William, defying the French invader to his worst, do not sufficiently answer the description, Abbot Thomas should suffice. He was Prior of Tynemouth before attaining to the higher dignity. During his Priorship a Scotch invasion burst over the North of England, and a desperate crisis it was. Edward III. and the Black Prince were in France, and with them every available soldier in England, waging that campaign which closed with the great victory at Cressy. Only a woman remained to direct affairs in England, and there seems not to have been a man of tried military capacity left behind to rely upon. Consequently, when the whole power of Scotland, under the command of Douglas, was hurled upon the Northern provinces, to create a diversion in favour of the French, the alternatives appeared to be that the English army must evacuate France, or all England must be overrun. Castle after castle fell, the country was ravaged, the nobility were impotent and panic-stricken, and it seemed as if the enemy would march

on London. Then there arose the man, and, as usual, he arose just in the spot where nobody had been looking for him. Prior Thomas had been an active Religious, and his zeal in administration, in organising preaching revivals, or, as we should call them "Missions," throughout Tyneside, had been indefatigable. And now that a man was needed to play the patriot, the soldier spirit rose within Prior Thomas. The Priory walls were strong, the battlements high, arms and provisions enough were got in to stand a siege for ever if need be ; and when the Prior sent broadcast his appeal to the people, to rally round him for England, the public veneration for his character evoked an enthusiastic response. When the news reached Douglas that David was once more advancing against Goliath, it rather tickled his fancy, and as he was of a boastful turn, he sent a message bidding the Prior have good entertainment, as he proposed to sup with him in a couple of days. And he kept his word : for on the second day, exactly, Prior Thomas received him at the gate as a prisoner of war. The irony of the situation evidently struck the Prior, and he seems also to have thought that the vain-glorious braggart deserved some slight chastisement. It was administered in polite sarcasm. "Your Lordship's visit is by appointment," he said with a courteous, but possibly a significant smile. "It's much against my will" the abased boaster grunted. "To me," persisted the urbane Prior, "no visit could have been more welcome." England and France had been watching the conflict in breathless suspense, and exultation at the issue was what might have been expected. When the news reached the English army before Cressy, that a valiant Monk had hurled the united power of the Bruce and the Douglas to his own side of the Border, the Black Prince, soon to be known as the foremost soldier of Europe, gave way to an ecstasy of generous ardour: "I love Prior Thomas," he cried, "like my own brother"; and ever after he showed him the filial affection of a son, mingled with the admiring respect due to a brave fellow-soldier. King

Edward swore his martial priest soon after Abbot of St. Albans, of the Privy Council—and a seat at the Privy Council, like a seat in the Lords, meant rather more then than it does now. His Majesty acquired such confidence in the Abbot's judgment that he consulted him upon the deepest questions of policy; John of Gaunt, and the other Royal Dukes, were frequent guests at the Abbey; so were the nobility; the Black Prince, when in England, always paid his respects to the Abbot; and when King John of France became his prisoner, it was to Abbot Thomas that his safe-keeping was entrusted. The Monks appear to have been at a loss what to make of the banqueting. True, the Abbot seemed to eat little. But there he sat in his robes, handsome, dignified of bearing, and elegant of manners, at ease himself and the charm of the company. The King of France vowed that there was not a finer gentleman or a more learned Prelate in all France. It was true also, that the heads of other houses had great faith in the Abbot; and his zeal for discipline, his charity to the poor, and his tenderness to his brethren were great. If the bellringer was not sharp to the minute for the midnight hours, the Abbot was there before him; nobody was so fond of attending to the sick in the infirmary, and if any poor brother was seized with vomiting or other repulsive affection, to hold the necessary vessels, to support the weary head, to whisper tender sympathy, was the Abbot's delight. Still, when he sought to relinquish his dignity there were not wanting insinuations that it was a false modesty. So things went on for fifty years, until the Abbot—an aged man of eighty or more, the shrunken skeleton of his former self, and in the last throes of an excruciating strangury, had to be put to bed to die. Then, when others had to undress him, the truth was known. Then his awe-struck brethren learned for the first time that under every brilliant exterior—whilst marshalling an army to save England, sitting at the Council of State, and presiding with courtly grace among Royal guests, their Abbot had daily, through it all, worn next his skin a shirt of stinging bristles.

My task is now virtually done ; but to treat of our old English Monasteries without some reference to the connexion between the Catholic religion in their day and the same in our own, would be to leave half the subject untouched. Speaking generally, their festivals, their ritual, and their doctrines, are such that we might be reading of Ampleforth or Downside Colleges in our own day. We have the High Altar, the Lady Altar, daily Masses of the Blessed Virgin, of the Saints as they appear in our own Ordo, and for the Faithful departed. If poetic justice could be visited upon those who question whether the pre-Reformation Church in England used copes and chasubles, there would be no difficulty in enumerating, from this chronicle alone, as many as would smother a modern Anglican Cathedral Chapter. Even "continuity" rather gives the old Monks up on the Papal question ; but it finds comfort in the Bishops. It is a vain comfort. As this chronicle proves, the Bishops and the Monks were bound up inextricably together. Every new Abbot had to be installed by Bishops Commissioners appointed for the purpose by the Popes ; the monastic shrines were publicly patronised by the Bishops ; and, in brief, one-half of the pre-Reformation Bishops were Monks themselves. I am not sure of the exact number, but in about half-a-dozen of the dioceses the Bishop and all his Chapter must be Benedictines. One or two other points of interest the chronicle throws light upon. When Protestants want to play a trump card, they quote the Immaculate Conception as an indisputable instance of Papal innovation in doctrine. Yet, positively more than seven hundred years ago, we find Abbot Geoffrey, in 1119, enumerating several festivals which must be celebrated by the whole Community "solemn-wise, in copes." One of these was "the Conception of the Blessed Virgin." Another 150 years, and we find it noted as an interesting fact that the election of Abbot John de Berkhamstead, the twenty-fifth Abbot, took place in December, 1290, "on the day after the Conception of the

Blessed Virgin." Here is another connecting link between the new time and the old. It is related of the great Abbot Thomas, whose career was the last to be alluded to, that every night at Compline he had three strokes sounded on the gong, which he accompanied with three prayers and the Angelic Salutations. The official editor places an explanatory footnote to this obscure allusion. He reminds us of Luke i. 28. No doubt the reference is correct; but for all that, the footnote entirely misses the point of this, to me, most interesting allusion. When we compare this statement with our own practice in England and abroad, is it not clear that in these "three prayers and the Angelic Salutations" we have an unmistakable trace of that beautiful devotion of the *Angelus*, which is not so common nowadays as it might be? A question that is, in some respects, the most important of all, I have reserved for the last. It is sometimes alleged that religion as laid before the people by the pre-Reformation clergy was merely formal, and destitute of earnestness or spirituality. The directions, regulations, and exhortations in this chronicle afford overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Abbot Thomas and his preaching "Missions" disprove it; the care to have a large number of students in Oxford qualifying themselves in Divinity, with a special view to preaching, disprove it. Then there are the minute instructions laid down for vicars as to their teaching, and practice, and worthiness of life, and the stringent precautions taken to exercise watchfulness over the parishes by visitation and by the half-yearly district synods, from which no vicar was allowed to absent himself. I can only have the conscience to enumerate just one instance. It is alleged against the old priest and the old Monk that he cared for nothing but his title. Here is the old monastic constitution upon the subject. If parish owners were behind with tithe and dues, the confessional might be used for their recovery, and people might avoid the confessional for that reason. "Let no question of money," the ordinance says, in effect, "stand

between the soul and the tribunal of penance." A vicar might know that the man or woman before him had not contributed a farthing to the church expenses for years. But he was prohibited from breathing the slightest hint, under most severe penalty; and as the Archdeacon was instructed to make this a point of diligent inquiry at his visitation, detection was almost sure in case of disobedience.

Such were the ancient Abbots of St. Albans. When we reflect upon the lives they lived and the work they did; on their austerity and their benefices; on their inestimable services to civilisation and the Commonwealth; on the grand pioneers and the apostles of charity; on the statesmen and the patriots; how zealous they were for learning and for the diffusion of spiritual religion; how typical of the English character at its best; how proud of England, and how revered by their countrymen—when we think upon these things, and of the havoc wrought by Henry Tudor; of the appalling falsehood by which it was accomplished, and has ever since been maintained, is there not cause for wonder that even in hell itself malignity so black could be found?

W. P. JACKSON.

The Woman of Venetian Art.

WITHOUT excessive modernity in our ideals of beauty, we may nevertheless feel convinced of the singular gracelessness of the women of the Venetian school of painting. Let an exception be made, once for all, of the sleeping and dreaming St. Helena in the National Gallery; also of two figures in the "Virgin and Child with Saints" of Bonifazio in the New Gallery; and of the little halo-encircled figure going up the steps in Titian's "Presentation of the Virgin" in Venice. But this done, what does the present show at the New Gallery present to us except a series of portraits and pictures of the most uncouth women that ever were the subjects of a school?

Neither woman nor painter in the great days of Venice had the mental image of graceful human attitude. Both had all the good-will in the world; for it is evident that even the thick woman in a turban—she who is by Lorenzo Lotto, and who is in an attitude with a drawing of the Roman Lucretia in her hand, is doing her best. But without the mental sense of elegance and an internal design, woman and painter must do their best in vain. Venetian woman of the sixteenth century is also perfectly common and dull in expression. To speak plainly, she looks as though she had neither virtue nor an education.

Her skeleton, her flesh, her dress, and her bearing are all in a tale. They are all ungainly in the same way. And that is what condemns her. The same square skeleton might have borne itself with some degree of vitality and spring had there been alertness in her spirit; so might the blond flesh have been worn with a

dignity of amplitude had there been dignity in her heart. The stiff velvet might have been set up with erectness, at least, as even more inflexible casings were worn by Queen Elizabeth, for example, had there been even the vivacity of erectness in the mind of the sixteenth-century Venetian. But there is none. No balance, no touch, no flight, none of that visiting quality which is a condition of life—a gay condition suggesting pathos. The Venetian woman always comes to stay.

She obeys no law more vital or organic or capricious than the law of gravitation. Look round the New Gallery walls. You will see the law of gravitation in emphatic and conspicuous force everywhere; not in implicit force, giving value and charm to the spring of an earth-tethered woman in her difference from an untethered air-balloon. No, but in explicit force. The Venetian woman is in a state of stable equilibrium.

It is impossible for the least intrusive imagination to avoid following these thick bodies down to ungainly feet serving as a complete architectural base, and to legs as stolid as balustrades, sharing with mathematical equality the burden they have to bear. Not otherwise can these figures finish. And as the feet are built upon the ground, so do the hips and the shoulders succeed each other, with a horizontal effect which is quite peculiar and local. And above them look the unsuggestive eyes that have never perceived the loveliness of a lovely line.

Obviously, the dress is appropriate. It was a costume that the dressmaker arbitrarily shaped and fitted, and yet the shaping and fitting were inexpert. No dress that cannot be shaped with skill should be shaped at all; it should be draped, and its shape left to depend upon the body. So dressed the Greeks, and so, until lately, were Hindoo women bound by rule to dress—with garments that adapted themselves to the figure and were uncut. There is no successful middle way. Nations that have not arrived at the artificial prettiness of finely-fitted dress had best be content with the natural beauty

of unfitted. But sixteenth-century Venice was precisely in the middle way. Her women were bent upon the division of their gowns into bodice and skirt—a fitted bodice violently joined to a full skirt, the conjunction being effected by force of folding and strong stitches. Look, for instance, again at the woman with the turban and the Lucretia drawing. Main force has been called in to make the pleats of her skirt hold in to the girth of her rigid waist. The Venetian looms yielded stuffs that were stiff with their own richness—velvets made from undiseased silk, and tissues woven from unbroken cocoons. Such stuffs are to be treated not otherwise than with breadth. The Flemish painters had an apprehension of this, and they let such silks flow out, with handsome effects of angular accidental folds where the rigid tissue resisted the wave as it fell. Such effects were dwelt upon in the foreground of many a Flemish Madonna's mantle. But the unlucky Venetians did with their beautiful cloths precisely the wrong thing. The woman crammed the stuff into pleats, not folds, and so did the painter paint it.

Moreover, it was evidently the fashion to wear some kind of dowdily artificial stays, that forced up the shoulders in such wise as to make arms akimbo the least uneasy wear. And evidently the Venetian woman of the sixteenth century found it so. She held her arms—both arms—severely akimbo, having her shoulders somewhat bent forward the while. There was no gaiety or swagger in the action. She never had a swashing and a martial outside. She stood thus because with that mind, that skeleton, and those stays, one does stand thus. And thus as she stood did the painter paint her.

Even when the arms are not exactly akimbo, they start out from the constrained shoulders in a manner that is also very local. But now and then the heavy and common attitude is relaxed, and this is when the Venetian master is painting a sacred figure or an antique figure, and not a portrait. He does not

place his Diana with her arms akimbo, or his St. Catherine weighing stupidly upon a couple of thick and equal legs. And this convinces one that the women were rather more to blame than the painters. In this very gallery the Titian "Diana" who pursues Actæon in her un-Venetian tunic has all the grace of life. But then, again, who can candidly aver that the same master's draped Ariadne in the National Gallery has such grace? She has no wooden stays on, but she runs as would run (if they were obliged to run) the Venetian women who have come to stay.

Roman art and the art of Parma, which inspired Canova and all the other dancing masters, had a false idea of grace—the silly grace of posture; but Venetian art, generally speaking, had no idea of grace at all—at any rate for women. Where the Venetian painters did attempt a corrupt following of Raphael was in the treatment of such subjects as that of the Resurrection. Here they gave to the principal figure a posture and an agility that are in every case deplorable.

Equally inappropriate to the subject, and to every grave subject, is their invincible admiration for rounded cheeks in compositions and in portraits alike. A face that was inevitably an old and wrinkled face was the only exception. For all else the smooth plumpness that looks unmasculine to our eyes to-day was the rule of beauty. And never a woman's cheek has the delicate hollows, or her jaw the signs of slender bones, that rather interest than displease the modern sight. But most unwelcome is this trivial fatness in the type of the Christ of the Resurrection—only less unwelcome than the attitude of a Mercury attributed to the same figure by Tintoretto and more than one other Venetian in Venice. It is by the ill-luck of common minds (how comfortable it is that now for the first time in the history of art and literature perfect sincerity is permitted in writing of anything that has fairly turned the fifteenth hundred of our era!)—it is, we say, by the ill-luck of common minds that

these painters should have summoned all the vivacity they had where it was destructive of dignity, while they could find none where it would have conferred dignity.

It is worth noting that the Venetian ideal of feminine beauty has lasted in Italy well into our days. The present writer has vivid recollections of hearing a certain general in the Italian Army, recently deceased, praise the loveliness of any lady he admired. His invariable gesture was to put his hands, in a circle, near one another ; this was to signify the impossibility of spanning, with two hands, the arm of such a beauty.

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries of Venice belong to man and woman exclusively ; and it is not until the eighteenth that landscape makes any noticeable claim. Landscape art visited Venice in that age as the season of spring visits her every year—with sea water, and sky, and the sunward aspects of walls, and the shadows of streets to bloom in.

ALICE MEYNELL.

Sir Ercenwin.

DATE 519 A.D.

Twas noon, and the sun, at its fullest power, was shining down on the white, dusty roadway that led from Metz towards the hills of Alsace ; beneath a tree, that shaded them as much as possible from the burning rays, sat two men ; knights they would seem, from their costume and the swords that hung beside them, but they were very evidently of different races ; for, while the one was fair and curly-haired, with blue eyes, shining white teeth, and an almost girlish look of refinement and elegance, the other was dark of complexion, large featured, and his eyes were filled with a calm, unruffled strength, that is seldom seen ; but both were tall and well made, and both might seem nearly the same age—between twenty-five and thirty, or thereabouts.

Their horses were grazing near them, well pleased at this unexpected rest ; for since early morning the travellers had ridden steadily without a break, and only now had the sun become so powerful as to oblige them to rest for an hour beneath the welcome shade of the wayside elm tree.

The Cymru knight (for such was he of the fair and curling locks) looked curiously about at the broad green plains around them, the purple hills in the distance, and dotted here and there on the horizon the little colonies of rough wooden huts dignified with the name of villages. No Christian churches or Monasteries yet shed their civilising influence over the land ; for though King

Clovis had many years ago been converted to that religion, it was in a very primitive manner that it was exercised in the country, however many priests and Monks might be at Court: and, perhaps, if the truth were known, there were as many, if not more, of the peasants and country folks who adhered, undisturbed, to the comfortable old pagan deities, as had unlearned all their childhood's doctrines to conform to the King's new gods.

Then the Cymru knight looked again at his companion, whose great, deep eyes were still fixed unswervingly, almost impatiently, in the one direction whither the dusty road led across the plain.

"Rouse thee, friend Ercenwin!" cried he of the fair hair, carelessly throwing pebbles at an upright stone on the other side of the road, "and tell me, thou who knowest the land so well, whose is that turreted castle to the east, there?"

The other turned his gaze upon the spot indicated for a moment, then said in his deep, passionless voice: "I know not; the castle is new, and 'tis seven years since I have trodden this path or rested beneath this tree."

"Seven years!" cried the other, as who would catch at the slightest phrase to carry on the talk; "and, in sooth, that reminds me, sweet friend, of a promise thou hast never yet fulfilled, a promise made long since in glorious Britain, when the moon shone bright on the silver ripples of Usk, long ere we crossed the sea together and wandered through the dark forests of Armorica and the land of the wild Ostrogoths in search of—what? Wilt not yet tell me? Surely my patience as a friend hath been long enough proven, and thou mayest with safety trust thy secrets to me now. In my eyes 'tis more than passing strange that thou, a Saxon, hast so found favour in the eyes of Britons, that thou hast not only been dubbed knight by their King, but has foughten for them in their battles, and yet still, when glory awaited thee, thou wouldest suddenly leave all

and return alone to Frankland ; alone, that is, had I not willed to accompany thee."

Sir Ercenwin the Saxon rose, walked into the midst of the straight white road, and looked intently for a moment in the direction whither he would go, shading his eyes with his hand ; then he gazed upwards at the burning sun, and with a sigh returned to his place beneath the tree.

"We cannot ride again," he said presently, "till the shadow of our kind shelter falls so ; but even then, if all is well, we should reach our destination ere the sun sets. Galleron, thou speakest sooth, it is indeed meet that I should tell thee whither we ride, and wherefore ; but when I have spoken, thou wilt know why the tale is mine, and mine alone, and I am loth to share it with another. A good and gentle friend hast thou been to me, Galleron, and 'twas a great proof of love to ride alone with me in a strange land, and the land of thy enemies ; therefore bear with me awhile an I tell much that may not interest thee, for I must begin my tale many years ago."

Sir Galleron thanked his friend right heartily of his courtesy, and leaned him against the bank, prepared to interest him deeply in some tale of love and chivalry ; and Sir Ercenwin, leaning his elbow on his knee and his chin upon his hand, began the story of his life.

THE TALE OF SIR ERCENWIN.

"Doubtless, friend Galleron, thou knowest little of the kings or of the people of this land ; yet surely hast thou heard of the mighty Prince, Clovis, who ruled and reigned here some seven or eight years since. Oft have I pondered on the good luck whereby it hath been my hap to meet face to face and speak with the three greatest men, mightiest kings, and surest conquerors that the world hath ever seen (and therewith I name not Theodoric the Visigoth, Attila the Hun, and Alaric the Ostrogoth, all of whom I have seen in childhood, and who were mighty men, 'tis true, but never crowned kings, and merely rude

leaders of the rabble); but under King Clovis my father served in many battles, and for meed was given him the Castle of the Watersleap in this country of Allemaine, where I was born and lived until such time as the great Monarch died, and the country fell to rack and ruin.

"In thy land of Britain I have been called a Saxon, yet is there not one drop of Saxon blood flows in my veins; I am in truth an Alleman, and when the King died and his domains were divided betwixt his four unworthy sons, my country fell to the share of Theodoric, the eldest, who settled his capital at Metz, where he still reigns, and under his rule some of the cruellest deeds and wickedest crimes the world hath ever known were committed.

"My mother died when I was but a babe, and with my granddame and my father I lived in the Castle, till twenty summers had passed, and then the King died. I had seen him oft, ay, and spoken with him too, and many a night had he spent beneath our roof, for my father was one of his dearest friends; and never will that day fade from my memory when the news of the King's death came to Watersleap.

"My father was riding early one morn over this very plain when he met one of the King's men, struggling along, footsore, weary, and splashed with mire, towards the hills; and when they came close up together the man knew my father, and stopped and told him what had happened, and together they went back to the Castle, and the man had food and drink given him, and the news spread like wildfire through the village; but my father said never a word on the matter, nor dared any speak to him thereof: but after that he cared no more for hunting or singing, but sat day after day, eve after eve, in his great chair by the fire in the hall, gazing steadfastly at what we could not see; and granddame, and Bathilde, and I were all the company we could get for one another.

"Of Bathilde I have hitherto said naught, yet is there much to

say. She is my cousin, the orphaned child of my mother's only sister ; and of all that is pure, and sweet, and fair, Bathilde is purest, sweetest, and fairest. When the British King made me knight, and I swore to succour every lady in distress, yet love but one, my thoughts dwelt on her ; and since the day, ten years ago, when she came to dwell with us at Watersleap, I have thought of little save Bathilde, the glorious star of my life.

“ She was but a little maid when we were first playmates, but we ever loved one another dearly, and when she grew to fifteen years we plighted our troth among the summer flowers in the sunshine, on just such another day as this. The old dame was pleased it should be so, and methinks my father, when we told him, smiled his mournful smile and was content.

“ How oft have I thought on the strange evening that followed the sunny noon ! We sat in the hall with the door left wide, for the air was sultry and the thunder growled in the distance, and the men and maidens sat around and spoke of the days of mighty Clovis and his gentle Clothilde, and of the sore times that were now come on the land ; but I thought of none but Bathilde, as I watched her sweet face bend over her distaff, and her nimble fingers amongst the flax.

“ And the thunder grew near and louder, and the storm burst over the hall with such force that some of the maids shrieked for fear, and I rose and made the door fast that they might not see the lightning flashing on the hills, nor hear the roar of the swollen torrent leaping over the rocks ; but even as I turned again to my stool there came a fierce knocking at the closed portal.

“ A frightened whisper ran round the hall ; ‘ Tis the storm god ! ’ they murmured ; and again I stood up and looked round, angered that not one of my father's vassals came forth to let in the stranger. A moment later and the knocking came again, and this time a voice cried, ‘ Shelter ! Shelter from the storm and blast ! ’ and at a sudden rush of colder air I turned, to see that

the cry had touched the gentle heart of my Bathilde, and she herself had listed the latch and admitted the wayfarer.

"It was an old man, whose grey hair and torn robes were wet with rain and buffeted by the wind, who pushed in amidst us and gazed inquiringly upon the group; but there was a bright, undaunted light in his keen blue eyes as he looked on me and demanded, in strong Northern speech, 'Be ye friends or foes?'

"'Friends to all that need shelter on such a night,' quoth I, and bade them fetch him meat and ale; and he ate and drank and was refreshed, and not till then did I ask him whence he came.

"Then he glared again upon me with his glittering eyes, and cried: 'Thou, too, art vassal to the girl-king yonder! For shame, young man; go out into the world and find a better master: is it meet to shelter in an old castle, with women and dogs, all thy days? Go forth, go forth; thou art a proper youth, and should'st be a proper knight—wilt find many a better king to serve beneath than yon crownèd devil-cub!'

"On which laid I my hand to my weapon in anger; for though the King was a bad king, yet was he my liege lord, and me-thought I would teach the old man better manners than to eat my bread and abuse my Sovereign; natheless, he waved his hand contemptuously upon me and cried again: 'Ha! would'st strike an aged man that hath no weapon to his hand? Oh, brave and noble youth! Fit servant for such a lord! Seest thou these grey hairs? I am a harper from the North; yet where is now my harp? I ply the craft that bringeth and receiveth peace to and from all men; but in the halls of Theodoric the Frank have I met with little peace, but scorn and cold looks and foul words; and they have torn my harp from me, and driven me forth in the storm in such a manner that 'twere better they had taken the last drop of my life's blood. Oh that *my* King were near! Well, then, were his servant avenged!'

"There was silence while the echoes of his voice rang amid

the rafters, and every man listened, for none of the country folks loved the King ; till after awhile I asked him, ' And who is *thy* King ? '

" ' *My* King,' answered he, ' is the King of the Jutes. True friend and open enemy ; the mildest in peace and the fiercest in war ; to no man has he done wrong, and well has he kept the land. *My* King is Beowulf, the henchman of Hygelae, the thane of Hrothgar, the slayer of the Grendel, and the mighty King of the Jutes ! '

" And with that he would speak no more, but sank back in his seat and seemed aweary ; and we left him there and went to our sleep : but when the morning sun broke over the Castle, the Northern harper was gone, nor did we ever see his face more.

" Nathelless had the old man's speech affected me deeply, and all that day and the next I pondered thereon, for it seemed to me that the words he had spoken were true, and I was of an age when most youths go forth into the world, to seek their fortune ; and wherefore should not I also win my spurs as others had done ? But not beneath Theodoric the Slothful, the harper spoke true ; and I could find a better master than he ; perchance I might even ride to the North, and find and serve beneath that mighty king of whom the old man spake. Three days I pondered these thoughts in my heart, and the third day I told Bathilde of my desire ; and she listened, and though the tears were in her eyes, she told me that she too had thought thereon, and was glad I should see the world and win my knighthood, and an I must go she would pray for me day and night, and wait patiently until such time as I came back to wed her. Then I kissed and thanked her tenderly, and swore to love her ever, and to return in seven years, else should she mourn me as dead ; and with that I went back to the Castle and took farewell of the ancient granddame and of my father, and once more kissed my dear love, and so mounted my horse and rode away across the plain.

" Now methought I would find the greatest king of the world

and serve him faithfully, and so I rode ever on towards the North for many days and nights, till I came to a land that was all sand and marsh with the sea washing around, and those I asked told me 'twas the land of the Jutes. Then I pressed on till I came to a town, and I asked where was the King of Jutland? But all the people were running to and fro and wringing their hands; and they answered me not, but only cried, 'Oh, the fire-drake! God Odin, save us from the fire-drake!' So at last found I an old woman that wept and moved not, but sat still by the roadside begging for alms, and I gave her gold and asked her what meant the noise and hubbub? And she clutched at the bright coins, and told that this was indeed Jutland; but that a terrible beast, that spat fire and killed all who were near, had of late come to the land and done much harm, and all the people on the coast were terrified and had fled to the city for safety: but that very morn the brave and aged King—who many years ago had delivered the land from the fiendish Grendel and his terrible kin—had put on his armour and taken his sword, and himself ridden forth to the waste marsh where the fire-drake lay hidden, to slay him and save the country, as he had done in days of old.

"Then I asked the old hag in which direction the King had set forth? And when she told me, I spurred on my horse across the sandy waste, and rode till I met three men running towards me, with looks of fear on their faces; and I asked them where was the King? And they pointed backwards from whence they fled, and ran ever on. And dusk had fallen on the land when I came to the place where lay that terrible beast, weltering in his gore, with the foul and poisonous breath hardly yet cold in his throat, and all around the ground was torn and trampled as after a great struggle. And hard by the old King lay dying in the arms of his kinsman, Wiglar; for in the death-struggle his strength was spent and his days were over, and as I lighted down off my horse and ran to help him, he looked in my face

and smiled, and bade me raise him in my arms, which when I had done, he turned to his kinsman and commanded him where and when he should be mound-laid, and so sank back once more, and was dead.

"And the chilly night-wind swept moaning over the marsh from the grey sea as Wiglar and I carried the mighty King back to the city of his people. So Beowulf of Jutland died, and in the morning I rode forth again alone to seek for the greatest king in the world.

"I rode for many days towards the South-west, and at last, when pushing warily through a thick forest, I saw a gleam of gold in a clearing beyond, and being come thither, I espied a most noble and goodly knight, all clad in glittering armour, with a golden dragon on his helm ; and he had lighted off his horse for awhile that the beast might rest, and he had plucked some sprigs of wild heather that grew near, and now looked tenderly on the delicate blossoms that lay in his mailed palm. And when he had espied me, he saluted me so courteously that I reined in my steed, and asked him what this country was, and who was the king thereof?

"'The land is Armorica,' he said, 'and Hoel is the King here.'

"'Is he a good and great king?' asked I. 'Is he the greatest king in the world?'

"Then the knight laughed. 'A good king in sooth is he,' he said ; 'but I know not an I should say the greatest in the world. But look now, hither he comes, and for thyself canst thou judge.'

"And right so was I aware of other knights that rode quickly up, and amongst them was the King of Armorica, for so I judged him by the crowned device upon his shield, and they all rode around him with whom I had first spoken.

"'Fair nephew,' said this one, and a glorious smile lit up his fair countenance, 'here is a stranger youth that would fain know an

thou art the greatest king, that he may serve thee. What sayest thou thereto ?

“ Then all the knights laughed greatly, and he of Armorica turned and looked curiously upon me, and then spake : ‘ In sooth, young stranger, an thou seekest for the greatest king, well hast thou done to come hither ; for a greater wilt thou never find than my noble uncle, Arthur of Britain ! ’

“ And I was struck dumb with amazement, for strange and wondrous tales had I heard of this same Arthur, and there were many in Allemanie who thought him no true man, but come of fairy birth ; yet there he now stood before me, taller than all those around, and the sunbeams danced through the green leaves and played on his frank, open face, and on the golden pendragon that surmounted his helm. Gentle yet high was his mien, and I sank on one knee before him, craving pardon for that I had so addressed him ere I knew what name he bore. But he raised me quickly, and said that an I would, I should serve him and take my knighthood at his hand ; for that strong arms and true hearts were sorely needed in Britain, spite of the prowess of his many brave and faithful knights.

“ So when the kings, with all their following, rode back from the woodland to the palace of Hoel of Armorica, I too rode with them, and when, after many days, the King crossed the sea to Britain, I also went with him ; and we found the Saxons had broken the three years’ truce wherein the King had visited the Holy Land ; so quickly Arthur gathered his men together and went forth to meet Cerdic the Invader. Wheresoever the tide of battle rolled I followed the King, and fought by his side. And there was one time when we were alone upon a little knoll, and all beset with Saxons ; and when, after sore trouble, they were all despatched, and we turned to see the fight was o’er, and the invaders defeated, the King looked upon me and said : ‘ Well and valiantly hast thou fought, Ercenwin, and this day hast thou won thy knight-

hood ; at the Feast of Pentecost I will make thee my knight, and thou shalt have a sieve at my table : ' whereat I cried ' Gramercy ! ' and thanked him greatly. And together we walked across the field to our pavilions, and as we went the King's brow grew sad, and he said to me : ' 'Tis a great slaughter that we see here to-day, yet will the Saxons return in greater numbers than before, and even I cannot live and keep the land for ever. I have no son, and I know not what shall hap to Britain when I am hence ; perchance a day will come when she shall fall into the hands of the Saxons, and the very name and memory of Arthur and his knights shall fade from her annals ; how can we tell that even on these white cliffs I love so dearly, and where we now stand, ay, even in mine own Welsh land in the west, Arthur of Britain will not be all forgotten ere many years be past ? '

" ' My King ! ' I replied, ' 'tis impossible. Surely, so long as Britain herself survives she will gratefully treasure the memory of thee and the deeds that thou has hast done for her. Surely thou shalt never be forgotten. Oh, Arthur ! thy fame is firm as the rocks and changeless as the sea ! '

" But the King shook his head mournfully, and said : ' 'Tis for my country I fear, not for myself ; my name may die with me, but my Britain, oh my well-belovèd country ! what will be *thy* fate ? ' And with that he looked wistfully around and spake no more.

" The next day we rode to Londinium, and soon after that, still farther north to Caerleon, where the King held court that Pentecost. And there the beauteous Queen, with all the lovely ladies of her Court, came to greet Arthur and his knights, and there was much feasting and merriment ; and I noted how courteous and gentle was the King to his fair wife, although 'tis said that his heart broke when the sweet Guenever, the bride of his youth, died and was buried 'neath Glastonbury Thorn.

" Then at Pentecost Arthur made me his knight, with some

few others, of whom thou, Galleron, wast one ; and ever since that day have we two been good friends and companions in arms, yet is there one thing that has befallen me of which thou knowest nought. Some few moons since, as thou wilt well remember, the King's first and only child was born, and all Britain rejoiced greatly, and there were high festivities when the infant Prince was christened by the name of Noem by the Archbishop of Caerleon. And that same night, as I wandered alone by the rippling Usk, and looked up at the silent castle that loomed high in the misty moonshine, methought I heard a voice I had known long since, and I turned and saw a man crawling up the river's bank, and as he came nearer I knew him for an old retainer of my father's in far Allemaine.

“ I seized his hand, and asked eagerly of my dear love and all else at home ; but he seemed fearful lest he should be seen of others, and only whispered hastily the ill news he had brought. My father was dead, he told me, and Theodoric the King, in a wanton freak, had burnt the old Castle and dispersed the retainers ; and Bathilde was ill and worn, and longing sorely to see me : she and our old granddame were living now in a humble village cot, the home in truth of this same old servant who had come to me.

“ ‘ The seven years are well-nigh passed now,’ he said, ‘ and my lady is sore beset with trouble lest thou shouldest not return. Oh, Sir ! come, come at once to her ; for every day she stands by the door watching, and her cheek grows paler, and none can comfort her. Sore work have I had to win to thee, for the people here think me a Saxon, and would make an end of me ; hist ! was not that a voice ? ’ We listened, and in truth heard voices coming nearer, and old Carlon turned towards me with one last imploring ‘ Follow ! Oh, promise me, sweet Sir Ercenwin, that thou wilt follow quickly ! ’ And I had scarce time to answer ‘ Ay, that will I ! ’ when some soldiers passed by, talking and laughing, and the old man vanished in the bushes on the river's bank.

"How he had found me I know not, nor if he hath returned in safety ; but I resolved at once to go to my Bathilde, and bring her back to Britain with me. So I entered the King's presence and told him all, and he said it was well so, and bade me God-speed ; and then, Galleron, as I was about to depart, thou camest up and wouldest go with me, and in sooth I took it as a kindly thought of thine, dear friend.

"And so it hath come to pass that I have seen the three greatest kings of the world ; for surely, so long as the solid earth remaineth, so long will the names of Clovis the Frank, Beowulf the Jute, and Arthur the Briton be loved and honoured ! And as we have ridden together, Galleron, methinks I have been but a churlish companion to thee ; but perchance wilt thou pardon me when thou rememberest how sore my heart must be, that I have not sooner returned to fetch my dear love away to me, but have let the years pass away unheeding. But now I have returned—returned from afar ! and beneath yon white-flecked cloud, where the hills meet the plain, there stands the hut where my Bathilde is waiting and watching for me even now. See ! the sun has sunk already towards the west ; let us mount and ride onwards, for my heart is hungering for the sight of her whom I love ! "

It was evening, the sun had almost sunk to rest, and the shadows were gathering in the hollows of the mountains, while the swallows swept round and round the cottage, now and again stopping to rest beneath the eaves. Within, upon a straw pallet, lay a girl sick unto death, and beside her sat an old, old woman. Wondrous fair was the maiden ; but her face seemed almost transparent, so white and thin was it, and her deep blue eyes wandered anxiously around the room, ever resting upon the narrow casement, through which the sunset shed a warm red glow into the little chamber.

"Grandmother," she said in a soft, low voice ; "is there nothing yet on the road ? Surely there must be now."

"I have looked but a moment since," grumbled the old woman wearily, "and there was naught. Look not for him, poor child ; he is happy elsewhere, and will not return."

"Nay," said Bathilde gently, "but he will return ; I know it, my heart tells me so. Look again, Grandmother, I pray thee ; methought I heard the tramp of a horse even now."

The dame rose grumbling, and looked from the casement "Thou art right, child, there are horsemen drawing near," she exclaimed after a moment ; "two knights they would seem, and one is—ah ! they are coming here !"

She broke off suddenly, and Bathilde, half raising her fragile form from the bed, cried : "It is he ! I knew he would come ; I knew he would return to me ! Oh, Ercenwin, Ercenwin !" as the door burst open, and the long looked-for figure strode in and caught her in his arms.

Sir Galleron had waited without for some moments ; but as there came no sound, he pushed open the door gently, and entered. At the foot of the pallet knelt the old grandame ; and there, in the arms of Sir Ercenwin, her long, yellow hair falling over his shoulder, and a happy smile still on her white lips, lay Bathilde—dead.

B. C. H.

At the Royal Institution.

TO interested audiences at the Royal Institution, Mr. W. S. Lilly has been lecturing on four of the great "English Humourists of the Nineteenth Century." Very rarely do any two temperaments agree, either as to the exact amount of homage to be offered to an author, or as to the precise terms in which that homage is to be expressed. All the greater, therefore, is our interest in knowing what others feel and say about the works which have done so much to amuse and to teach mankind. We give a summary of Mr. Lilly's appreciations, in the order in which they were delivered :

DICKENS.

Mr. Lilly said that a humourist had for his subject the ordinary actions and personages of every-day life, but he must bring to play upon them an endowment in which the majority of men were deficient. Mere talent was insufficient, since talent, being imitative, produced, to a certain extent, unrealities. Genius, on the other hand, always gave us living types as the fruit of its imagination. The "differentia" of the humorous genius was that he treated his subject with playfulness—either grim and tigerish playfulness like that of Swift, or innocent and kittenish playfulness as that of Gay. His definition of a humourist was "an artist who playfully gives us his intuition of the world and human life," and he added that the most natural and ordinary vehicle for this humour was the novel. The daily round of duty ought, of course, to furnish us with everything we could justly ask; but, as a matter of fact, it failed to do so, and hence the deep-seated and invincible tendency of men to break away from routine experience. To this craving the novel administered. Our great humourists generally became novelists,

although there were those (Carlyle, for example) who found other forms of composition more suitable to their temperament. He took for his four typical humourists Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, and Carlyle, because they were eminently representative of the *Zeit-geist* of the century—Dickens as the democratic, Thackeray as the philosophical, George Eliot as the poetic, and Carlyle as the prophetic humourist. He chose to look at these humourists from one special point of view, namely, that of their substantial contributions to the world of literature. The time had now arrived when we could fairly judge of Dickens as a literary artist, since the magnetic spell of his personality held us captive no longer. That magnetism was a marvellous thing. Sydney Smith said, "I resisted Mr. Dickens as long as I could, but he has conquered me." As a boy, the lecturer admitted, he too had been conquered. And yet to-day he had to confess that he went back to Dickens with an effort. Looking into his pages recently he stood aghast at the inanities, the crudities, and the ineptness of diction, the surprisingly vulgar details with which he had crowded his pages. In his latter days Dickens was fond of talking about his "art"; he considered his later work his best. The truth was his best work was done at the commencement of his career. "Pickwick" was his greatest achievement; the fun was unequalled, the pathos of the finest order in many places. Yet the author thought slightly of it; he aimed at "better work"; throughout his whole career he strove earnestly after a standard of perfection which he never actually realised. Perhaps he came nearest to this in "David Copperfield." But the unreality of many of his later characters was painful. His young men were impossible and inane—he must have borrowed them from Adelphi melodrama—his young women were as inane as the young men; and over his lovemaking it were better to draw a veil. In "Copperfield," however, we had one living figure, and this precisely because it was Dickens's own transformed self, with his own troubled and depressing youth. "Our Mutual Friend," it was said, was considered by Dickens as his highest piece of work. He (Mr. Lilly) took it down from the shelf to read the other evening, and fell asleep over the second chapter. That dinner party at the Veneerings—was there ever such society or such people? Twemlow was not half as good as Lord Dundreary, who was himself as unreal as could well be. The whole book was full of ghastly and phantasmal writing, despite the touches of high genius which here and there lighted

up the pages. Said a French friend to the lecturer, anent Dickens, "*Sa manière est tout-à-fait bour-r-r-r-geoise*," and the intense trill in that last word spoke volumes of criticism. The style bespoke the man, and if one wanted Dickens's self revealed, one got it in his "*Pictures from Italy*." Making allowance for a few real touches, as a whole it bespoke itself the work of a bagman of genius. Dickens could never emancipate himself from his early environment; he represented the invasion of the democrat into the novel. But it was his want of culture, his very limitations that threw him back upon his genius as a resource. With vigour and originality he was superabundantly endowed. Originality became a passion. He lived in his work; the children of his brain were as real as those of flesh and blood to him, and that was precisely the reason why he made them so real to us, notwithstanding that they might be monstrosities, with no counterpart in actual life. This was abundantly evident in his readings. Never were such readings; he was one man sustaining three or four parts without scenery or costume, yet making the whole thing live before us, as they might have lived upon the dramatic stage. Those who spoke of his "*affectations*" did so unjustly; his mannerisms were no more affectations than the dialect of Carlyle or the stage voice and walk of Mr. Irving—they were part and parcel of the man. Leigh Hunt said Dickens had life enough for fifty men, and this was no over-statement. He knew how to touch the strings of laughter and of weeping (so near akin), to move us to boisterous merriment at will, or to quiet scorn, or the rush of sweet tears. He (the lecturer) did not know any English writer who had touched higher excellence in burlesque, caricature, and pathos. Mr. Lilly read an extract or two in illustration of these three qualities, taking Sam Weller's story of the gentleman who blew out his brains in sacrifice to his life-devotion to buttered crumpets, as a perfect type of the first-named quality. Coming in the end to a considered judgment of Dickens's work, the lecturer held that his mission was to democratise the novel. One of the great causes of his popularity was that he revealed the masses to the classes, and the masses to themselves. Of the common people—"the lower middles"—he knew every detail of their actions, thoughts, and speech. He was the first to reveal the depths of misery and degradation lying close around our own doors. Until we read him we did not know the depths of pity in our own hearts. The masses themselves owed to him a perception of the value of imagination in common life; he

showed them the beauties of imagination. Their own world was transfigured by his genius ; he was the Homer of the people. Finally, throughout the whole of his career he laboured incessantly for moral, social, and political reforms. And now, what would be his permanent place in English literature ? That question could not be definitely answered even yet. The balance in which Time weighed the works of genius vibrated long before it came to an adjustment. Dickens was as numerously read and seemed as popular as ever amongst the masses ; but with people of culture it was different. His works were not seen in the hands of young men at College—that was a significant fact, and a bad sign for the future. But yet the ethical sentiment which ran so persistently through Dickens might, in the end, cover a multitude of sins in taste. And, in any case, they must remember what Carlyle said of him—“ Every inch an honest man.”

THACKERAY.

Mr. Lilly dissented from Taine's estimate of Thackeray's genius. The great French critic confessed Thackeray's abounding common sense, consummate cleverness, and great knowledge of the human heart, but brought against him the common indictment of the critics that he converted the novel into satire, was a cynic of the school of Swift pure and simple, and made even his “good characters” contemptible and ridiculous. Taine also declared that he waged war upon the upper classes and was a leveller, and compared his work very unfavourably with that of Balzac. He believed that this estimate of Taine's proceeded from the fact that Taine was a spokesman of the school which looked at psychology as a branch of molecular physics, and that ethics had nothing to do with art. The true duty of the artist in romantic fiction was to elevate, refine, and moralise. The novelist was most largely concerned with the passions, but he must treat them as an artist and not as a physiologist. Balzac was doubtless the greatest master of romantic fiction the world had ever seen. His judgment was entitled to the greatest respect ; but he himself had declared that the literary artist should seek to moralise his epoch. If Thackeray was inferior to Balzac in genius and even in talent, still both men had much in common. Thackeray's intellectual endowments were originality, intelligence, and perspicacity of observation. He had much of that warm instinct for life under all conditions and contrasts which was given to very few, and, moreover, a curious power of moral divination—a kind of ethical second sight. But these endow-

ments would have availed him little except for the culture which his earlier circumstances permitted him to obtain, first at Charterhouse and afterwards at Cambridge. Here he received instruction in those good old "humanities" which the lecturer considered incomparable as a means to mental culture. He spent some years in Germany and France, and, returning to England, entered one of the Inns of Court.

But it was not until 1833 that he experienced that moral discipline which was not the least element necessary as fitting him for the work he had to do. He lost the whole of his fortune—either at play or in speculation. Except for this fact, he might never have realised the truth of Shakspere's line, "In the reproof of chance lies the true proof of man." Stern necessity overcame his natural indolence of spirit, and he had to turn to literature. Touching Thackeray's early beginnings, Mr. Lilly read a charming letter addressed by the great author to a young friend who announced his forthcoming marriage. "I married," he wrote, "at your age on £400 a year, paid by a newspaper which failed six months afterwards. I always love to hear of a young fellow facing his fortune bravely in that way. If I can help you, I will. Though my marriage was a wreck, yet I would do it all over again; for, behold! Love is the crown and completion of all earthly good. A man who is afraid of his fortune never deserved one. I wish you the very best. The pleasantest home I ever knew in my life had only £300 a year to keep it up on."

Mr. Lilly said that the sorrow of Thackeray's married life only served to deepen and strengthen his character. Before he became recognised in literature he had twelve hard years of apprenticeship. It was not until 1846 that he commenced in *Punch* that series of papers which made at once his fortune and the fortune of *Punch*. The "Book of Snobs" Mr. Lilly said he regarded as a masterpiece of humour of the satiric order. In it there was truly exaggeration and caricature, but the indictment drawn was substantially true. It aimed at the characteristic vice of the English people—an undue deference for artificial and unreal superiority. But Taine was in error in supposing that Thackeray was a leveller. Thackeray recognised the right divine of all true superiority, but he rejected all false and artificial superiorities, knowing that their day was doomed. Aristocratic by birth and nature, he perceived that the day of caste and privilege was over. His very last words in the "Book of Snobs" were to tell us that the great problem was, how the

world was to organise equality. He knew society was an organism of units, but not of units all alike.

In 1846 appeared "Vanity Fair," of which Mrs. Carlyle wrote: "It beats Dickens out of the world." It stamped its author as the greatest painter of manners (with, perhaps, the exception of Fielding) that had ever appeared in the field of English literature. The simpleness and directness with which Thackeray told his story proclaimed the supreme literary artist. Nowhere could characters be found so deeply cut. As to the remainder of his literary works, Mr. Lilly said Thackeray's qualities were worthily sustained by them. "Esmond," he considered, perhaps, the most artistic and perfect. The lecturer said he had in this lecture to consider Thackeray as the type of the philosophical humourist. In his works Thackeray gave us his own experience and meditations on life, dramatised, as it were, upon a mimic stage. He drew the world around him as he saw it—extenuating nothing; but also setting down nothing in malice. He saw the seamy side of society: its littlenesses, self-seeking, cruelty, false religionism, secret lusts—in a word, its worldliness. "Vanity Fair" might be written up as the title of all his works. But while he saw the seamy side he saw not less clearly the purity, goodness, love, and pity which exist side by side with the abounding evil. He saw these things clearly, and discerned in them the chief goods of life. Mr. Lilly, in conclusion, pointed out that the influence of Kant's philosophy was to be detected throughout Thackeray's writings, although it was possible that Thackeray had never read a line of Kant in his life.

GEORGE ELIOT.

Mr. Lilly devoted his third lecture to a critical review of the work of George Eliot, whom he described as "The Humourist as Poet." He said that the function of poetry was day by day becoming of more importance. Hitherto it had been the hand-maid of the different religions of the world, but for a long time to come it would have to discharge some of the functions hitherto discharged by dogmatic religious teaching, and even at the present time it had a great part to play. The poets who were the most widely influential in this age were those who did not use metrical forms. Metre was not of the essence of poetry. The common antithesis between poetry and prose was misleading. There was much so-called prose which was admirable poetry out of metre, and much so-called poetry which was villainous prose in metre. The antithesis was rather between prose

and verse. The vast majority of poets were now tending to be unmetrical, and for a long time the novel would be the most popular, penetrating, successful, and persuasive interpreter of ideal truth. In this age poetry appealed most widely under the form of the novel. Poetry was the "natural language of impassioned feeling." George Eliot faithfully fulfilled his definition of the humourist as one who "playfully gives his intuition of the world and of human life." Her playfulness was of a grave order, reminding him of Socrates. For her formal poetry he cared little; it left him cold. Mr. John Morley had aptly described it as "majestic in intention and sonorous in execution." It was to her novels that they must go if they would see her make full proof of her powers as a poetess. Wordsworth had enumerated six powers which he considered requisite for the production of poetry—observation and description, sensibility, reflection, imagination and fancy, invention, and judgment. It appeared to him that George Eliot possessed all those powers in a remarkable degree. She stood quite alone among English writers of romantic fiction. In judgment she appeared to him to be pre-eminent, and this came out in the artistic completeness particularly of her earlier works. There was a moral unity about her work which denoted the highest genius. She had excelled in very different orders of poetry. As time went on, a certain pedantic affectation of science marred her poetic gift. Her biological studies thwarted the natural bent of her science. Her works breathed the *ethos* of the old Greek tragedians. She had most in common with Euripides. In truthfulness to life and deep religious feeling she and Euripides were akin. Her work was essentially dramatic. She knew that sorrow was the great Sacrament and fount of purification; she knew that happiness, like the light, required a dark background of chaos and inane for its gorgeous colouring. The very spirit in which her work was done was a protest against evil. She discerned that the law of right ruled throughout the universe; and that a law which could be disobeyed with impunity was no law at all. It would be easy to trace in all her writings the supremacy of the law of right, and the certainty of retribution, in one shape or another on those who broke it. "Adam Bede" he regarded as the high-water mark of her genius. He was accustomed to consider her the great tragic poet of this century, doing for her day and generation a work parallel to that of Euripides in his day and generation, effecting a mental purgation by pity and terror, and arousing,

as no other writer of prose, at all events in our day, had aroused, the nobler emotions. He entirely agreed with what had been said by Lord Acton, "I know no work more ennobling than that of George Eliot."

CARLYLE.

Mr. Lilly said that the teacher who had most helped him to form his spiritual and intellectual character was Thomas Carlyle. In vindication of Carlyle from his many assailants several things could be said. He was essentially human, and being human the faults and foibles incident to humanity came out in him more strongly than they were wont to come out in men who were less human—that was to say, more animal. Much of Carlyle's irritability could be traced directly to a physical cause. During the whole of his life he was a martyr to dyspepsia. But it was to be expected that a prophet would be sometimes arbitrary, choleric, uncomfortable, and unjust, as Carlyle doubtless was. It was, however, the testimony of those who knew him intimately that he was one of the most tender-hearted, generous, and self-sacrificing of men. Emerson had said a true word about him: "Carlyle, of all men in his time, best kept the manly attitude." In the character of a humourist he differed essentially from Dickens, Thackeray, and George Eliot, in that he did not work in the domain of romantic fiction; indeed, he was known to express quite an unwarrantable contempt for the art of the novelist. He found romantic fiction too frivolous for the world to which he had to speak; the historical narrative or the fantastic medley was more suitable to his work. He could not be counted an historian; in spite of his "French Revolution," his "Cromwell," and his "Frederick." The truth was that in him the historian was always subordinate to the humourist; the artist playfully gave them his intuition of the world and of human life. Carlyle's playfulness was of a grim order; sometimes that of the lion, sometimes like that of the bear, but playfulness it was, and that was his essential note. He proceeded by intuition and affirmation—the true prophetic spirit—he exhorted, denounced, persuaded, condemned, but very seldom reasoned. He read the signs of the time with a clearness given to no one else. He acknowledged the aid he had gained from Goethe, and what helped him most was that Hellenic largeness of life that breathed throughout Goethe's pages. There was much in common between Carlyle and Mohammed. There was a singular spiritual unity about all Carlyle's works which made them such a wonder-

ful power. Froude had described his teaching as "Calvinism without the theology." That was not, in his judgment, a very accurate description. Accuracy was not among Mr. Froude's many high qualities. Carlyle rejected most of the Calvinistic theology, but retained two of its most essential verities. He tried to get down to the great truths of that theology, and found two that seemed self-evident borne in upon him with irresistible force. One was that the infinite revealed itself to the living spirit. For him the moral law was essentially transcendental. It appeared to him that upon those necessary universal ideas of truth and right, and upon them alone, could the edifice of order in human life be safely reared. He regarded human life individually and collectively as a time of probation, and here was the explanation of that doctrine of his so often misunderstood concerning might and right. In Carlyle, the great sage and teacher, he reverently recognised the prophet in the proper sense of the word, the man raised up to put before his day and generation higher ideals in religion, morals, and politics than he found current; the man sent into the world to proclaim verities essential both to the individual and society which had been largely forgotten. Did anyone say that his teaching was imperfect? For his part the lecturer found it so. He thought that Carlyle rejected many things in the traditional creeds which he might reasonably have retained; but in his unswerving loyalty to truth he would not go one hair's-breadth beyond what he saw and knew; and in that unswerving loyalty to truth was to be found one of the great secrets of his power. Personally unable to join himself to any sect or denomination of Christians, his attitude to Christianity from first to last was one of devout and grateful reverence. For dogmas he cared little; he was not brought up to attach much importance to the canon of *Œcumene* Councils or the rulings of Popes, which were the source from which most definitions of Christian dogmas now current were obtained. He regarded the doctrines of religion as largely the commandments of man, and tried to distinguish between them and what he called "soul Christianity."

There, not Here.

W EAVE on with tangled threads of joy and hate,
 O Toilers at Life's loom in darkness here,
 Nor hope that God will make a darkness clear
 Which was not of His causing. Ye must wait
 Until He gather up, or soon or late,
 All the sad webs left floating loose since sheer
 The sharp doom smote them down that year by year
 Fashioned thereon some unexpected fate.
 Then shall He hold these wayward threads aright
 And weave a picture wherein all shall find
 Their place allotted for most fit delight—
 But, till God gather up them all, mankind
 Must weave in darkness, waiting for the light
 Of Heaven to dawn, for He will not be blind.

ARTHUR AUSTIN JACKSON.

Reviews and Views.

CHRISTINA **R**EMI-
ROSSETTI NISCENCES. **S**OME "Reminiscences of Christina Rossetti" are contributed to the *Bookman* by Mrs. Katharine Tynan Hinkson—a lady whose poetry has, with Miss Rossetti's, a spiritual kinship which qualifies her to speak as a sister would of the great poet who has gone:

It is now nearly ten years since I published a small volume of verse, which was strongly tinctured with my admiration for the work of the Rossettis, brother and sister. Dante Rossetti was three years dead, but I had only recently become acquainted with his poems, and was full of fervour about him. Someone suggested I should send the little book to Mr. William Rossetti, which I did ; and this led to Miss Rossetti seeing the book, which, by the way, I had accompanied by a letter full of young enthusiasm about the brother who was so dear to them. A second copy, sent direct to Miss Rossetti, was acknowledged by the gift of her "Time Flies," and a very gracious letter full of her characteristic humility. "Beyond all *gifts*," she wrote, "I account *graces*, and if you have honoured my form by thinking it worth imitating, much more may I your spirit." Some further letters passed between us, for with the egoism of youth I kept sending her my callow productions ; and the following winter, when I was in London, I visited her several times. The first time I came, in the winter twilight, old Mrs. Rossetti, then well over eighty, was present, and was as interested as anybody in the fervent lover of their dear Gabriel. She sat by the fire in a big chair, her eyes quite bright and alert, and listened to my raptures, and if she failed to catch what I said, turned to Christina, who repeated it for her. She had still the remains of the noble beauty which is in her son's portraits of her, and struck me as looking a really great old woman. I remember the gesture

with which she turned to her daughter, laying a fine old hand on hers. "My affectionate Christina," she said. Miss Rossetti somewhat disappointed my sentimental ideas of her, because, at that time, she was so much more brisk and cheerful than I expected. I must have said something of the sort to her, for she said: "I was a very melancholy girl; but now I am a very cheerful old woman." I used to think that she laid this cheerfulness upon herself as a duty, thinking, perhaps, like Dante, that sadness was one of the sins. Cheerfulness in that house seemed a little discordant. Entering it you felt the presence of very old age, a silence that draped and muffled the house. It was not like any other silence—the silence of a Convent, for instance, broken only by the tinkle of a bell and the rapid *swish* of a habit. It was heavy, and seemed to darken as well as to muffle sound. At that time Miss Rossetti was devoting herself to the care of her two aunts, the Misses Polidori, as well as her mother, and they were all three approaching their century. It must have been sad for her, however love sweetened her task. After a little while Mrs. Rossetti grew tired, and her daughter assisted her to her bedroom, asking me to wait for her return. When she came back she lit the candles on the mantelshelf and showed me some relics of her brother. "You would have been charmed by our dear Gabriel," she said; "so many were charmed, and so many remember him." His sketches, and photographs of his pictures were all about the walls. I remember especially a pencil-drawing of his beautiful young wife. I think she was asleep in an armchair. "Poor little Lizzie," Miss Rossetti called her. She also told me that when she and Mrs. Morris appeared at an evening party, both being brides, no one could say which was the more beautiful, the fair or the dark beauty. "Lizzie was so graceful," she said. She told me she had few visitors from the outside world, except now and again an American, Americans being great admirers of her poetry, and probably unaware of her cloistered habits. She spoke of Mrs. Piatt's poetry, which at that time I scarcely knew; and then, or some other time, she also spoke of another lady's poetry with admiration. The following spring old Mrs. Rossetti died, and I think her death snapped her daughter's strongest link with life. I still heard from her occasionally. In April, 1888, she wrote, "Advancing age and ailing health tell upon me. I am not strong, and I am more than content not to be strong." I saw her again the following year. It was a wet August evening, and London at its most melancholy. She talked then chiefly about my own

concerns, but I noticed that the brisk cheerfulness which had disappointed me on my last visit had departed. She was allowing herself to grow old. I only saw her once afterwards, in the autumn of 1893. I heard from her occasionally, and, as she spoke of herself as an invalid, I did not like to intrude upon her. When I asked her if I might come that once she assented cordially. It was the only day I saw the house quite bright and sunny. Miss Rossetti was lying on a sofa, but stood up to receive me, welcoming me with great kindness. She only lay down again at my earnest request. I did not think she looked ill. She was always in my knowledge of her colourless, as a person who kept the house much and led a sedentary life. She kept the strong spiritual beauty of the face her brother painted as the young Mary, predestined to superhuman sorrows. Her great heavy-lidded eyes always seemed to me of peculiar significance, perhaps because the only other woman I knew who had those great lids was also strangely heroic and strangely spiritual. I sat by her couch while she talked with her old kindly human interest in my affairs. That was my last speech with her. Now that she is gone our thought of her is Cowley's thought of Crashaw in Heaven :

Whilst angels sing to thee their airs divine,
And joy in an applause so great as thine ;
Equal society with them to hold
Thou need'st not make new songs, but say the old.

ARCHBISHOP LAUD. **T**HE memory of Archbishop Laud has been honoured amongst Anglicans during the

last few weeks by various sermons and shows. But best of all is it honoured by such addresses on Reunion as those to which Lord Halifax has lent his weighty name. Perhaps even Laud himself would not have felt able to go all the way with Lord Halifax. Certainly, no Archbishop of Canterbury since his time has had the courage to go half so far. The portrait of Archbishop Laud which we reproduce is that which was painted by Sir Anthony Vandyke, and is now in the collection at Lambeth Palace.



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